

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION FOR
APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 AND
THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM**

HEARINGS

BEFORE THE

**COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
UNITED STATES SENATE**

ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

S. 1197

TO AUTHORIZE APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 FOR MILITARY
ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE, FOR MILITARY CON-
STRUCTION, AND FOR DEFENSE ACTIVITIES OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
ENERGY, TO PRESCRIBE MILITARY PERSONNEL STRENGTHS FOR
SUCH FISCAL YEAR, AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

**PART 6
PERSONNEL**

APRIL 17 AND 24, 2013



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE PROGRAM—Part 6
PERSONNEL

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**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**ACTIVE, GUARD, RESERVE, AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL
PROGRAMS**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:00 p.m. in room SR-232A, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Gillibrand, Donnelly, Kaine, King, Ayotte, and Graham.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Gabriella E. Fahrner, counsel; and Gerald J. Leeling, general counsel.

Minority staff members present: Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; and Allen M. Edwards, professional staff member.

Staff assistant present: Jennifer R. Knowles.

Committee members' assistants present: Elana Broitman and Kathryn Parker, assistants to Senator Gillibrand; Marta McLellan Ross, assistant to Senator Donnelly; Karen Courington, assistant to Senator Kaine; Steve Smith, assistant to Senator King; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; and Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND,
CHAIRMAN**

Senator GILLIBRAND. Good afternoon, everyone. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony from the Department of Defense (DOD) on the Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian personnel programs contained in the administration's National Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2014, and the Future Years Defense Program.

Today we will have two panels. The first panel consists of senior DOD leaders with whom we will discuss not only DOD personnel policy issues, but also specific budget items pertinent to our subcommittee's oversight responsibilities. Our witnesses are the Honorable Jessica Wright, Acting Under Secretary of Defense for Per-

sonnel and Readiness, the Honorable Jonathan Woodson, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs and Director of the TRICARE Management Activity, Mr. Frederick Vollrath, the Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Readiness and Force Management, and Mr. Richard Wightman, Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs.

The second panel will consist of representatives from groups of Active and Reserve component servicemembers, retirees, and their families. I will introduce them after the first panel concludes.

As this is my first budget related hearing as chairman of this subcommittee, I want to begin by recognizing the hard work the subcommittee has done over the past decade. While we have more work to do, the committee has significantly improved the pay and benefits of servicemembers, enabling the Services to recruit and retain the very best, and maintain the highest caliber force, even during a decade of persistent armed conflict.

This subcommittee has supported numerous enhancements to the TRICARE benefit over the last decade as it has supported enhancements to pay, critical family programs, transition assistance programs, education benefits, morale and welfare programs, mental health counseling programs, and survivor benefits, all to ensure continued viability of the All-Volunteer Force during a decade of war.

The military health system delivers world class care to over 9.5 million beneficiaries, Active Duty members, Reserve members, retirees, and dependents, and has achieved unprecedented rates of survival from combat wounds. While we must continue to look at ways to expand TRICARE to cover autism treatment, on the whole TRICARE is an extraordinary program.

It is clear DOD faces significant budgetary and programmatic pressures. For the remainder of the fiscal year, DOD will operate under the sequestration imposed by the Budget Control Act (BCA), and, as a result, DOD will have to take extraordinary measures to deal with the across-the-board programmatic cuts of nearly 8 percent. The budget submitted by DOD for fiscal year 2014 does not account for any sequestration of funding in the fiscal year, which, if it remains in effect, would reduce DOD's budget by yet another \$52 billion.

Because of the current budget environment, the President's budget request reflects some difficult choices that this subcommittee will have to carefully examine as we begin consideration of the annual defense bill. The budget requests a 1 percent across-the-board pay raise for military and civilian personnel. This is regrettably below the annual rise of the employment cost index (ECI) of 1.8 percent. This hearing is our opportunity to hear from both our military and advocacy group panels about the impact of this pay raise level, as well as the housing and subsistence allowance increase of about 4 percent. The Department's budget request assumes savings of \$540 million based on holding pay raises to just the 1 percent.

The Department also proposes to establish or raise certain fees related to health care coverage for military dependents and retirees. Congress has not supported these proposals in the past years, and I personally remain very skeptical about increasing costs for military members and veterans. The Department's budget request

has assumed nearly \$1 billion in savings in fiscal year 2014 as a result of these health care proposals.

There is no greater responsibility for Congress and military leaders than to support our brave servicemembers, their families, and the civilian employees who are vital components of our military team. While the President has protected the military personnel pay accounts from sequestration, he could not do the same for DOD civilian workers, which gives me great concern. The furloughs that are planned for the rest of the fiscal year, while perhaps necessary, breaks our commitment to our civilian workforce.

Our defense civilians include an important support network as well as many of the experts in critical fields, such as cyber security. Even as DOD works to comply with the congressional mandate to reduce the size of the civilian workforce, civilians are in the midst of yet another year of pay freeze. DOD and Service leaders have expressed their concern not just about the short-term negative effects these furloughs will have on critical services for servicemembers and their families, but of the long-term effects, including damage to morale and the prospect of our most talented young people may no longer view national service as a viable career option. I share their concern.

A highlight in the last year of personnel issues, however, is the expansion of personal benefits to same sex partners: the opportunity to shop at commissaries, take emergency leave, and participate in family-centered programs. I know that the Department is waiting to implement additional benefits, such as health care and housing, until the Supreme Court decides the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act.

I urge you all to be as forward leaning as possible in ensuring that all of our military benefits are as inclusive as possible.

Lastly, I want to say something about sexual violence in the military, an issue which I remain deeply committed to solving. I held my first hearing as chairman of the subcommittee last month on this topic. As I said then, a system where less than 1 out of 10 reported perpetrators are held accountable for their alleged crimes is not a system that is working. That is of just the reported crimes. The Defense Department itself puts the real number closer to 19,000. A system where in reality fewer than two out of 100 alleged perpetrators are faced with any trial at all is clearly inadequate and unacceptable.

This committee and DOD took some first steps on this issue as part of last year's National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) that President Obama signed into law, including ensuring that all convicted sex offenders in the military are processed for discharge or dismissal from the Armed Forces, regardless of which branch they serve in, and reserving case disposition authority for only high ranking officers in sexual assault cases.

Secretary Hagel has made an important announcement by proposing changes to Article 60 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice so that courts martial cannot be overturned by the commanding officer. This is a good step forward, and I commend the Secretary for honoring the commitment he made to me by taking this issue head on. But it is not enough, and Congress must act to address this issue. I look forward to continuing to work with my

colleagues on the legislation to hold those who commit these violent crimes accountable.

I look forward to hearing your testimony about other important personnel programs and the overall morale and health of our military. As always, I encourage you to express your views candidly and tell us what is working well and to raise any concerns and issues you may want to bring to the subcommittee's attention. Let us know how we can best assist our servicemembers and their families to ensure our military remains steadfast and strong.

It is now my privilege and honor to give the mic to Senator Graham. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I appreciate it.

I am very interested in TRICARE. We have had discussions in my office and this room, all over the building for years about what we can do in a rational, logical way to deal with the growth in TRICARE costs to the government. In 2001, it was \$19 billion. I am told in fiscal year 2014, it is \$49.4 billion.

To the beneficiary community, we certainly want to listen to your concerns about how to make the program more efficient. But I am looking for sustainability. I am looking for a generous benefit that is sustainable, because if it is not sustainable, it is a false promise. We cannot get ourselves in a situation where we are dealing with retiree health care and a shrinking military budget, and pit it against modernization, weapons, and Active Duty needs. There has to be some way to make this program more sustainable, and ask of some of us, like myself who will be retired in a couple of years, to have a gradual premium increase. I am certainly willing to do that. I just want to make sure that what we are asking of the retired community is rationale, is logical, affordable. So that is a big deal for me.

As to the pay increases, I wish it was more. I wish it was the 1.8 percent. But once we get sequestration behind us, replacing this \$1.2 trillion cut where half of it falls on the military over the next decade with a bigger deal, which I think we can do—at least I hope we can do—that will free up some money for discretionary spending.

To all the witnesses, thank you. To the organizations who support men and women in uniform, the retired force, I look forward to hearing from you.

I have to go to the floor at 2:20 p.m., but I shall return.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator Graham.

You are each now invited to give your opening statement.

Secretary Wright.

STATEMENT OF HON. JESSICA L. WRIGHT, ACTING UNDER SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, PERSONNEL AND READINESS

Ms. WRIGHT. Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss personnel and readiness programs in support of the President's fiscal year 2014 budget request.

You have heard from Secretary Hagel that the fiscal year 2014 budget is based on the defense strategic guidance, a comprehensive review of military missions, capabilities, security rules around the world. It is also a proposal made in face of extraordinary fiscal budget uncertainty caused by sequestration and the BCA of 2011.

In fiscal year 2014, the DOD budget, \$526.6 billion, includes \$137.1 billion for our military personnel, as well as \$49.4 billion for military healthcare, adding up to approximately a third of the base budget's request. As Secretary Hagel stated, our people are doing extraordinary work and making great sacrifices. Their dedication and professionalism are the foundation of our military strength. Therefore, it is our job to make sure that we take care of them.

We are here today to discuss how the fiscal year 2014 budget and plan will affect the Total Force, the Department's greatest asset. The Department's Total Force, Active, Reserve, National Guard members, government civilians, and contract service representatives, a carefully coordinated approach balances operational needs, and satisfies mission requirements, and recognizes fiscal constraints. After 11 years of intensive operations, our warriors and civilians are experienced and more proficient than ever to execute current operational missions and respond to emergent needs throughout the globe. We must build on the most appropriate total force by actively recruiting and retaining the right people for the mission with the appropriate level of compensation and benefits. Building and sustaining the right balance also requires constant vigilance of readiness.

Therefore, we want to thank Congress for the legislative authorities in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, which provides flexibility to affect required drawdowns. These authorities allow the Department to avoid the loss of critical expertise and provide military Services the tools necessary to manage their force with the least impact on readiness.

Next, our mission to support servicemembers and their families by providing a network of services and programs which promote readiness and quality of life. This means the Department must keep pace with our servicemembers by doing all it can to protect the men and women from harm. This includes preventing and responding to sexual assault, working to lower the risk of suicides, and providing a reliable network of legal and health services in the time of need.

Finally, our responsibility continues as our men and women prepare to transition into civilian life and become a veteran. A new generation of servicemembers are coming home, and we must live up to our commitment to them because of their service and sacrifice. Whether it is on the battlefield, at home, or with their families, or after they have faithfully concluded their military service, we are committed to preparing servicemembers for whatever challenges they may face from warrior to veteran. They really deserve no less.

I will turn to Dr. Woodson, Mr. Vollrath, Mr. Wightman, to discuss their particular policy priorities under their purview.

Dr. Woodson.

**STATEMENT OF HON. JONATHAN WOODSON, M.D., ASSISTANT
SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, HEALTH AFFAIRS, AND DIRECTOR
OF TRICARE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITY**

Dr. WOODSON. Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to present the President's budget request for military medical programs for fiscal year 2014, and for the distinct honor of representing the men and women of the finest military health care system in the world.

Over the last 11 years, men and women serving in the military health system have performed with great skill and courage. They continue to help advance military and American medicine as witnessed by many comments in the tragic aftermath of the Boston bombings. They continue to serve courageously and to simultaneously provide a service that engages in combat and medical operations, supports a comprehensive peace time health care system, and respond to humanitarian crises around the world. It is unique among all militaries on the globe.

The medical readiness of men and women in our Armed Forces remain at the center of our mission and strategy. We are using every tool at our disposal to assess our servicemembers' health before, during, and following deployment from combat theaters, and we are committed to improving the health and wellness of all who receive care in our system.

Concurrent with our mission of maintaining a medically ready force is our mission of maintaining a ready medical force, a force of medical professionals who are well trained, engaged in ongoing active clinical practice, and supported by military hospitals and clinics that are operating at optimal capacity. To sustain this active practice also requires beneficiaries to choose the military medicine system as their primary and preferred source of care.

As we maintain our readiness, we must also responsibly manage the budget we are given. In 2013, the Department and the Federal Government have encountered headwinds. Budget sequestration continues to present significant challenges to our system and would create potentially catastrophic effects if this approach to budgeting were sustained through 2014.

Still, we must be careful stewards of the taxpayers' dollars, and in this effort, the Department has proposed both internal and external reforms of military medicine.

Internally, we are undergoing a comprehensive set of reforms of how we are organized as a military health system. The overarching goal of this effort is to create an even more integrated system of care, better coordinating delivery of services in Army, Navy, and Air Force medical facilities, along with care provided by the Veterans Administration (VA) and the private sector medical community. Improved integration combined with more streamlined decision making will result in better health care, better care overall, and cost deficiencies.

We are in a collaborative and effective pathway forward to eliminate redundancies within the military health system, improved business practices, and clinical outcomes, and effectively managed care for servicemembers and their families. We have a strong, committed leadership team that includes senior civilian and military

leadership of all Services and the Joint Chiefs of Staff to ensure that we achieve these goals.

Externally, the administration is once again asking military retirees to pay more than they do today for health benefits that they have rightly earned and that they now receive, but proportionately less than when the health benefit was initiated. In an era characterized by more limited resources, we must make decisions and determine tradeoffs among a series of important mission requirements—military operations, training, research, and benefits—particularly the enormous and profound responsibility for lifelong care for our veterans who seek services and benefits for conditions related to their military service.

Our proposals will slow the growth in retiree health benefit costs to the Department over time, while keeping in place the comprehensive medical benefits that retirees receive, and ensuring that this program is there for future generations.

The proposals will not affect most Active Duty family members. Additionally, our proposals exempt the most vulnerable within our retired population from fee increases to include families of servicemembers who died on Active Duty and families of servicemembers who are medically retired.

Many other challenges remain ahead for the military and medical system. We are working to mitigate the harmful effects of sequestration involving civilian personnel and limit cuts in our vital military medical research programs. We will continue to identify approaches that curb unnecessary utilization of health care services, and we are increasing our emphasis on wellness, and we are deepening our collaboration with the VA.

I want to close by thanking Congress, and particularly this subcommittee, for its long support of our programs and its endorsement of our establishment of the Defense Health Agency to improve administration of the military health system.

Thank you for your time today, and I look forward to your questions.

STATEMENT OF HON. FREDERICK E. VOLLRATH, ACTING ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, READINESS AND FORCE MANAGEMENT

Mr. VOLLRATH. Chairman Gillibrand, members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to join you today.

As we transition from a decade of war, the Department is challenged with managing a total force and maintaining our readiness and capability under significantly reduced funding. Sequester will have a great impact on the Department and will add new challenges in meeting national security needs. But it will also reinforce the need to take a hard look at our programs and our priorities in order to effectively and efficiently implement necessary reforms in order to maintain a ready force.

A tangible aspect of readiness remains our ability to recruit, train, and retain an All-Volunteer Force. We need to carefully manage scarce resources while supporting military compensation and benefits reform without breaking faith and while sustaining the All-Volunteer Force. As our combat operations are lessened, there remains a need for sustainment of family programs and wellness,

because the military experience remains one of selfless service and sacrifice, of long training exercises and family separations.

There will always be stress on the force and our families. Therefore, we must continue to monitor these programs carefully and strive to sustain those that remain critically important as we experience funding reductions in the years to come. For example, the Department's suicide prevention efforts will continue to be a top priority as we implement the provisions of the NDAA for Fiscal Years 2012 and 2013, as well as the President's executive order on this matter. Additionally, as we draw down our forces, we will continue to improve and enhance our transition assistance and licensing and credentialing efforts to better prepare servicemembers for transition to their civilian lives and the civilian labor force.

Given reduced resources and a smaller total force, we remain committed to recruit and train the most qualified candidates. Therefore, the Department remains focused on fully implementing the February 2013 Secretary of Defense decision to eliminate the 1994 policy that restricted women from being assigned to direct combat units, as well as open more military occupations to women.

Madam Chairman, this concludes my statement. I thank you and the members of the subcommittee for your steadfast support and leadership. I am happy to answer your questions.

Mr. Wightman.

**STATEMENT OF HON. RICHARD O. WIGHTMAN, ACTING
ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF DEFENSE, RESERVE AFFAIRS**

Mr. WIGHTMAN. Thank you. Chairman Gillibrand, members of the subcommittee, I thank you for your invitation to participate in this hearing. I welcome the opportunity to give an overview of some issues we are addressing in the Reserve components.

I would also like to thank the committee and your staff for all that you have done for the men and women in uniform, especially for those who it is my responsibility to serve, the 1.1 million members of the Reserve and National Guard and their families. Today I can report to you that we have over 55,000 mobilized members of the National Guard and Reserve supporting operations globally.

Current utilization and a combination of factors change the way we view future utilization of our Reserve component and constitute a new normal. Although major force commitments to Afghanistan are being reduced, there is a pivot of our national defense strategy towards the Asia-Pacific region. A volatile international security environment still persists, and a constrained defense budget for the foreseeable future will place additional burdens on manning, training, equipping, recruiting, and retention of the total force in fiscal year 2014 and beyond.

Therefore, continued use of the Reserve components as a part of the operational total force makes sound business sense. The Reserve component as part of DOD's total force provides the ability to preserve capability and capacity and reduce costs to manageable risk.

Our National Guard and Reserve is undoubtedly the most combat seasoned Reserve component force ever, and the Department is seeking ways to leverage the Reserve component to provide needed military capacity during current austere economic times. These fac-

tors necessitate use of the Reserve component across a broad spectrum in the future to include: continued routine use as a part of the operational force as we have over the past decade, fulfilling day-to-day operational missions at home and abroad, albeit on a smaller scale, and the use of a portion of the Reserve component in its traditional role as a strategic reserve.

The new normal use of the Reserve component as part of the operational force is enabled by a key principle of the 2012 Defense Strategy: emphasizing rotational presence versus forward station presence. This concept, combined with legislative changes under section 12304 Alpha and Bravo, enacted by Congress in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, authorizes further use of the Reserve components.

The first permits the use of Reserve components in response to disasters in the United States as we recently witnessed during Hurricane Sandy. The second permits access to the Reserve components and opens the opportunity to participate in peace time overseas rotational posture and deterrence missions. However, the Department must also continue to preserve equality of the All-Volunteer Force and not break faith with our men and women in uniform, their families, and our civilians.

Despite these difficult economic circumstances necessitating budget reductions across all levels of government, the Department is committed to providing servicemembers and military families with support programs and resources and empower them to address the unique challenges of military life. With close to 1,700 events projected for this fiscal year, programs, such as the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, continue to provide relevant, reliable information and resources to military members, their families, and designated representatives throughout the deployment cycle, and complements programs such as the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), by assisting servicemembers as they transition between their military and civilian roles.

Programs, such as the Hero to Hire, or H2H, provides a comprehensive approach aimed at enhancing career readiness and reducing unemployment of our Reserve component members. This program has helped facilitate over 1,000 placements per month since October 2012.

Today's citizen warriors have made a conscious decision to serve since September 11 with full expectation that their decisions might mean periodic recalls to Active Duty under arduous and hazardous conditions. They will continue to play a vital role as we move beyond the past decade of war, and the Department shapes the force to implement defense strategy and respond to the challenge of a new era.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

[The joint prepared statement of Ms. Wright, Dr. Woodson, Mr. Vollrath, and Mr. Wightman follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY HON. JESSICA L. WRIGHT, HON. JONATHAN WOODSON, MR. FREDERICK E. VOLLRATH, AND MR. RICHARD O. WIGHTMAN, JR.

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you to discuss Personnel and Readiness (P&R) programs in support of the President's fiscal year 2014 budget request. The President's plan implements and deepens the commitment to the new strategy, which meets the Department of Defense (DOD) needs in a complex security environment. The fiscal year 2014 DOD budget request of \$526.6 billion includes \$137.1 billion for our military personnel as well as \$49.4 billion for military medical care, which add up to approximately a third of the base budget request.

As you have heard from Secretary Hale today, the fiscal year 2014 budget is based on the Defense Strategic Guidance announced on January 5, 2012, "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense," a comprehensive review of American military missions, capabilities, and security roles around the world. It is also a proposal made in the face of extraordinary fiscal and budget uncertainty. The March 1 sequestration order called for a nearly \$41 billion reduction in DOD's fiscal year 2013 budget in the middle of the fiscal year, and we face substantial additional cuts (roughly \$52 billion per year in fiscal year 2014 and beyond) that could force major changes to the fiscal year 2014 President's budget. Sequestration in fiscal year 2013 would also have major effects in fiscal year 2014.

Given these challenges, we are here today to describe how we can sustain the All-Volunteer Force (AVF) for generations to come—a force that has a proven record of unprecedented success in operations around the world. Thank you for your continued support of our Active, Reserve component military members, their families, and our government civilians who serve with distinction every day.

BUILD, SUPPORT, AND TRANSITION THE TOTAL FORCE

The Department's Total Force of Active and Reserve military, government civilians, and contracted services represents a carefully coordinated approach that balances operational needs, satisfies mission requirements, and recognizes fiscal constraints. After over 10 years of intensive operations, our servicemembers and civilians are more experienced and proficient than ever to execute current operational missions and respond to emergent needs throughout the globe. Our people are the Department's greatest assets and we will continue to be the most powerful military force in the world by building and sustaining this extraordinary Total Force.

We must build the most appropriate Total Force by actively recruiting and retaining the best people for the mission with the appropriate level of compensation and benefits. Building and sustaining the right balance also requires constant vigilance of readiness—to ensure that our servicemembers are adequately trained and equipped to face whatever battle they face. Therefore, we want to thank Congress for the legislative authorities in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013 which provides flexibilities to affect required drawdowns. These authorities allow the Department to avoid the loss of critical expertise and provide the Military Services with the necessary tools to manage their force structure with the least impact to our readiness.

Next, it is our mission to support the servicemembers and their families by providing a network of services and programs which promote readiness and quality of life. This system of support extends from military medical care to family readiness services and includes support for National Guard and Reserve members and their families. Support also means that the Department keeps faith with our servicemembers by doing all it can to prevent and protect men and women from harm. This includes preventing and responding to sexual assault, working to lower the risks of suicides, and providing a reliable network of legal and health care services in a time of need.

Finally, our responsibility continues as our men and women prepare to transition to civilian life or veteran status. A new generation of servicemembers is coming home, and we made a lifetime commitment to them for their service and sacrifice. Thus, with Congressional support and strong commitment by the President, we have implemented the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, which provides the necessary tools for servicemembers to make a successful transition out of the military to the next phase of their careers and lives.

The P&R portfolio of policies and programs is extensive and we will attempt to highlight our recent accomplishments and future challenges in this statement. The first section provides updates to issues of significant congressional concern. It will be followed by overviews of the three major policy offices under P&R. Although this

lengthy statement does not cover all our programs, it is a reflection of our efforts to better build, support and transition our servicemembers.

Recent Military Personnel Policy Changes

Women in Service

Over the last decade of war, our military women servicemembers have put their lives on the line to defend the country with courage, patriotism and skill. It is in the interest of our national security to have the best and brightest person serving in any position based upon their abilities, qualifications and performance. This is consistent with our values and relevant to military readiness. Service should be based on ability not gender.

The 1994 DOD policy prohibited women from being assigned to “direct ground combat” units below the brigade level and permitted the military departments to restrict assignment of women based on privacy and berthing, physical requirements, special operations and long-range reconnaissance, and colocation with a direct combat unit (e.g. a medical unit with a direct combat unit). In February 2013, former Secretary Panetta completely eliminated the 1994 policy at the unanimous recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Service implementation plans are due to the Secretary of Defense by May 15, 2013. The policy will be fully implemented by January 1, 2016.

Same Sex Partner Benefits

Following the repeal of Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell (DADT), DOD engaged in a review of the possibility of extending eligibility for benefits, when legally permitted, to same-sex domestic partners of military members. The benefits review group examined benefits available to servicemembers and their families and divided these benefits into three categories: (1) currently available member-designated benefits; (2) benefits not available based on current law; and (3) benefits that could be extended, under current law, to same-sex domestic partners and their children. The initial review extended 18 “member-designated” benefits. The Department later identified 24 additional benefits to extend to same-sex domestic partners by August 31, 2013 but no later than October 1, 2013.

The cost of extending benefits to same-sex domestic partners of military members is negligible. Many of the benefits selected for extension are programs designed to accommodate fluctuations in need and population, such as commissary and exchange privileges and MWR programs. Other benefits, such as dual military couple assignment opportunities and Emergency Leave, are provided to the servicemember regardless of relationship status therefore there is no additional cost anticipated.

Distinguished Warfare Medal

Secretary Panetta established the Distinguished Warfare Medal (DWM) on February 13, 2013, including its order of precedence directly below the Distinguished Flying Cross, to recognize the achievements of a small number of service men and women who have an especially direct and immediate impact on combat operations through the use of remotely piloted aircraft and cyber operations. Congress, veterans’ organizations, and the public have expressed strong opposition to the DWM’s precedence-level being above the Bronze Star and Purple Heart. After consulting with the Service Secretaries, the Chairman, and the other members of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Secretary Hagel directed a review of the DWM. While the review confirmed the need to ensure such recognition, it found that misconceptions regarding the precedence of the award were distracting from its original purpose.

On April 15, the Secretary announced that the Joint Chiefs of Staff, with the concurrence of the Service Secretaries, recommended the creation of a new distinguishing device that can be affixed to existing medals to recognize such extraordinary actions of this small number of men and women. The Joint Chiefs also recommend further consultation with the Service Secretaries, the service senior enlisted leaders, and veterans’ organizations regarding the nature of the device as well as clear definition of the eligibility criteria for the award. The Secretary directed that within 90 days final award criteria and the other specifics of the distinguishing device be developed and presented for final approval.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual assault is a crime and has no place in the U.S. military. It is a violation of everything that we stand for and it is an affront to the values we defend. Our DOD-wide mission is to prevent and respond to this crime in order to enable military readiness and to reduce—with a goal to eliminate—sexual assault from the military. The Secretary of Defense is committed to this mission and to eradicating this crime from our Armed Forces. Combating a crime that stays mostly hidden

from view despite the terrible toll it takes on the victims requires a coordinated, Department-wide approach. Our strategy is to apply simultaneous effort in five areas that we call lines of effort: Prevention, Investigation, Accountability, Advocacy, and Assessment.

As you are aware, on April 8, 2013, the Secretary of Defense announced that after reviewing the assessment of Article 60 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice by military justice experts, the judge advocates generals, the Service Secretaries and Chiefs, as well as the recommendation from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, he is directing a legislative proposal to amend Article 60 to be submitted to Congress. First, the proposal would eliminate the discretion of the convening authority to change the findings of a court-martial except for certain minor offenses that would not, in and of themselves, ordinarily warrant trial by court martial. While convening authorities would no longer have the ability to dismiss charges for serious offenses like sexual assault, defendants would continue to have access to a robust system of appeals rights. Second, the proposal would require the convening authority to explain in writing any modification made to court-martial sentences, as well as any changes to findings involving minor offenses. These changes will apply to all court-martials, not solely to court-martials for sexual assault offenses. The convening authority's post-trial discretion with regard to sentencing will be preserved. The Service Secretaries, the Joint Chief of Staff, and the Service Judge Advocates General all support these changes.

The Department has also initiated and/or implemented a variety of initiatives to fundamentally change the way the Department confronts sexual assault. For example, we have issued policy, consistent with the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013, establishing an increased document retention time of 50 years for sexual assault reports, which includes the sexual assault forensic exam form, and the victim's Reporting Preference Statement. The Department also issued new policy that provides victims of sexual assault who file an Unrestricted Report the option to request a transfer from their current assignment or to a different location within their assigned installation. This expedited transfer policy requires that victims receive a response from their commander within 72 hours of the request. If denied, the victim may appeal to the first general or flag officer in their chain, who also has 72 hours to provide a response. From policy implementation through December 2012, the Services approved 334 of 336 requests for expedited transfer.

The Department has aggressively pursued several avenues of change. In April 2012, the Secretary of Defense asked for the support of Congress in enacting the Leadership, Education, Accountability and Discipline (LEAD) Act to further codify into law specific reforms to advance sexual assault prevention and response. These six provisions were included in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013. The new law includes the following provisions:

- Establish a Special Victims Capability within each of the Services;
- Require all servicemembers to receive an explanation of all Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) policies within 14 days of entrance into Active service;
- Require records of outcome of disciplinary and administrative proceedings related to sexual assault be centrally located and retained for a period of not less than 20 years;
- Require commanders to conduct an Organizational Climate assessment within 120 days of assuming command and an annual assessment thereafter;
- Allow Reserve and National Guard personnel who have alleged to have been sexually assaulted while on Active Duty to request to remain on Active Duty or return to Active Duty until a Line of Duty determination is made; and
- Mandate wider dissemination of SAPR resources.

Other initiatives the Department has carried out include:

- Elevated the initial disposition decision for the most serious sexual assault offenses to ensure that these cases are addressed by a "Special Court-Martial Convening Authority" who is in the grade of O-6 grade (an officer at the Colonel or Navy Captain level) or above;
- Expanded the DOD Safe Helpline, an anonymous and confidential crisis support service to help transitioning servicemembers who have experienced sexual assault;
- Implemented a DOD-wide review and assessment of all initial military training of enlisted personnel and commissioned officers following the incidents Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland;

- Achieved full deployment of the congressionally-mandated Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID), enhancing our ability to collect data on sexual assault reports uniformly across the Department;
- Published the revised DOD-wide policy on the Sexual Assault Program that establishes and standardizes our prevention, health care, victim safety, training and response efforts, and clearly conveys the role of service-members and employees in sexual assault prevention and recovery.

Underpinning our effort is the need for enduring culture change—requiring leaders at all levels to foster a command climate where sexist behaviors, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are not tolerated, condoned, or ignored; a climate where dignity and respect are core values we live by and define how we treat one another; where victims' reports are taken seriously, their privacy is protected, and they are treated with sensitivity; where bystanders are motivated to intervene to prevent unsafe behaviors; and a climate where offenders know they will be held appropriately accountable.

We fully recognize we have a problem with sexual assault and will continue to confront the brutal realities until this problem is solved. The Department is firmly committed to this goal and that we remain persistent in confronting this crime through prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy, and assessment so that we can reduce, with a goal of eliminating sexual assault from the military and the Service Academies.

Suicide Prevention

Suicides among servicemembers have risen from 160 in 2001 to 350 in 2012. While suicides leveled in 2010 at 299 and 2011 at 302, there were a record number in 2012 (350). Unfortunately, this trend mirrors the rise in national suicide rates. While the stressors associated with 10 years of war play a role, more than half of those who died by suicide had no history of deployment and few were involved in direct combat. In 2011, the Department of Defense (DOD) created the Defense Suicide Prevention Office (DSPO), which leads efforts to issue policies, evaluate programs, enhance training and access to care, reduce stigma, address lethal means, standardize death investigations and increase data fidelity.

DOD is also working with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) on a 12-month national suicide prevention campaign that encourages servicemembers, veterans, and their families to seek help for their behavioral health issues through the Veteran/Military Crisis Line. This campaign, which began September 1, 2012, is part of the implementation of the President's August 2012 Executive order aimed at improving access to mental health services for veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

The Department is responding to section 533 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012, which calls for enhanced suicide prevention efforts with DOD partners; and implementing several policy and program requirements mandated by the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013. These requirements will be met upon implementation of the first DOD-wide comprehensive suicide prevention policy, currently projected to be completed by October 2013. The policy will include: continuity to quality behavioral healthcare during times of transition; sustainable Service-wide suicide prevention education and training program; methods for standardized mortality data collection; and requirement for each Service to staff, fund and maintain a Department level Suicide Prevention Program Manager.

Tuition Assistance

The DOD off-duty, voluntary education program, Tuition Assistance (TA), helped approximately 286,000 servicemembers take over 870,000 courses last fiscal year which resulted in over 48,000 college degrees. This program enables the professional and personal development of our servicemembers and also facilitates their transition to the civilian workforce.

As you are aware, last month, several of the Services suspended new TA agreements as a cost-saving measure due to sequestration. Given the enactment of the Department of Defense Appropriations Act, 2013 (P.L. 113-6), we are fully funding TA for the remainder of fiscal year 2013, without any sequestrations-related reduction.

Transition Assistance Program

In compliance with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act of 2011, and at the direction of the President, the Departments of Defense, Labor and Veterans Affairs redesigned the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to better prepare servicemembers to successfully transition to the civilian workforce.

The redesigned TAP curriculum, known as the Transition Goals Plans Success (GPS), complies with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act that mandates all eligible servicemembers being discharged or released from active duty after serving their first 180 continuous days or more under title 10, U.S.C., (including reservists and guardsmen) participate in Pre-separation Counseling, VA Benefits Briefings and the Department of Labor Employment Workshop. While some servicemembers may be exempted from attending the DOL Employment Workshop, as allowed by Congress, every servicemember will attend Pre-separation counseling and the revised VA Benefits Briefings—no exceptions.

These first components of the redesigned TAP are implemented at all 206 Active component installations. Additional components, including specialized tracks for servicemembers interested in Higher Education, Career Technical Training, or Entrepreneurship, will be phased in by October 2013. The bedrock of the redesigned TAP is that all servicemembers will meet Career Readiness Standards prior to separation.

Military Overseas Voting

The Department provided extensive voting assistance for the 2012 General Election. An active, comprehensive outreach program that included print and online ads and email “blasts” to all servicemembers (more than 18 million emails sent during 2012 for primary and general elections) informed voters of their right to vote and the tools and resources available to them. The automated “wizards” at FVAP.gov, the Federal Voting Assistance Program’s information-rich website, provided an intuitive, step-by-step process to help servicemembers, their families, and overseas citizens register to vote, obtain an absentee ballot, and if necessary, complete the Federal back-up ballot.

FVAP proactively continues to engage with the Services to ensure that the Installation Voter Assistance (IVA) Offices are operational and available to assist servicemembers. Current IVA Office contact information is maintained and available at the FVAP.gov website. Over 200 IVA offices have been established and are just one of the many resources that the Department and Services use to reach military voters and their voting age family members.

In advance of the 2012 elections, the Department awarded grants on a competitive basis to States and localities to research the effectiveness of new electronic tools for voter registration, blank ballot delivery, and ballot marking. It is important to note that no grant award funds were used for the electronic return of a voted ballot in a live election. Awardees are to submit detailed, quantitative reports on the effectiveness of their systems over the next 5 years. The Department is continuing the grant program this year in preparation for the 2014 elections.

READINESS AND FORCE MANAGEMENT

As we transition from a decade of war, the Department is challenged with managing a Total Force under significantly reduced funding, while maintaining overall operational readiness and capability. Potential furloughs, a current hiring freeze and reduced end strength will create additional challenges and reinforce the need to take a hard look at our programs and priorities and implement reforms and initiatives that achieve the ultimate goal of maintaining operational readiness during this period of fiscal uncertainty.

Military compensation and our military family programs, many of which were created to support a war-time operational tempo (OPTEMPO), will be closely examined for potential reforms. Likewise, we will continue to ramp up our transition assistance and licensing and credentialing efforts to prepare servicemembers for the civilian labor market as we reduce military end strength.

Although we are coming out of a decade of war and our OPTEMPO is lessened, there remains a need and a sustainment of family programs and wellness because the military experience remains one of selfless service and sacrifice, of long training exercises and family separations. There will always be stress on the force and on our families, therefore we must continue to monitor these programs carefully as we experience the funding reductions in the years to come.

Readiness

Our forces are postured globally conducting counterterrorism, stability, and deterrence operations; maintaining a stabilizing presence; conducting bilateral and multi-lateral training to enhance our security relationships; and providing the crisis response capabilities required to protect U.S. interests. The investments made in technologies, force protection, command and control, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) have helped maintain our military’s standing as the most formidable force in the world.

Regrettably, the impact of sequestration will likely reduce readiness through reductions in maintenance, operations and training, and indirectly through effects on the accessions and training for personnel and the production pipeline for equipment. This is especially worrisome as it may take years to recognize the shortfall, and even longer to mitigate or correct. Specific concerns include:

- Managing stress on the force: Over 10 years of high operations tempo have stressed our equipment and our people across the board.
- Return to full-spectrum training: While our ground forces are now experts in counterinsurgency, other skills have lagged. For example, the Army and Marine Corps are only just beginning to train units for unified land and amphibious operations. Most mid- and junior-grade members have never conducted these missions. We must relearn these skills without forgetting how to conduct counterinsurgency operations.
- Preparing for ongoing operations: While the demand for our ground forces will likely decline after operations in Afghanistan conclude, the tempo for Navy and Air Force is less certain. Navy deployments, for example, are likely to remain longer and more frequent than pre-September 11. Likewise, the Air Force has maintained a continuous forward presence in the Middle East for over 20 years and may do so for years to come.
- Resetting our equipment: DOD will need OCO funding for at least 2 years post Afghanistan in order to reset our equipment. This is a particularly serious concern for our ground forces.
- Budget austerity and uncertainty: The budget austerity and uncertainty under sequestration is complicating our efforts to mitigate readiness deficiencies.

A high operational tempo over the past decade, coupled with the recent budget cuts magnified the risk of an imposed mismatch between the size of our military force and the funding required to maintain readiness. Over the next year, the Department will identify the critical readiness deficiencies and articulate risks, identify and implement associated mitigation options, and identify the significance of any unmitigated risk

Language and Culture Training

The President directed the Department to sustain U.S. global leadership as we transition from a long-term engagement in two wars toward a more global presence focused on the Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. Currently, about 10 percent of military personnel have tested or self-professed foreign language skills. However, Spanish accounts for 45 percent of the Department's foreign language capability which does not meet current strategic language requirements. Thus, new and enhanced training, as well as program and policy developments will expand the language, regional and cultural breadth and depth of the Total Force.

The National Language Service Corps, a civilian corps of U.S. citizen volunteers with certified proficiency in languages important to U.S. security and welfare, grew from 2,407 in 2011 to over 4,000 members in 2012 speaking more than 260 languages and provided over 15,000 hours of support to Federal agencies. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 authorized the Secretary of Defense to transform the National Language Service Corps from a pilot to a permanent program and also enhanced the ability of Federal agencies to hire National Security Education Program awardees that possess strategic foreign language and cultural skills.

Active Duty Personnel

Active Duty Recruiting

Recruiting is critical to ensuring each Service and component is manned with a sufficient number of qualified people able to be trained and carry-out the missions that are asked of them. Over the last several years, the Services have recruited the highest quality recruits in the history of the AVF.

Generally, a slow economy makes recruiting less challenging, and operates to the advantage of those who are hiring, including the U.S. military. As we see signs of economic improvement, we must remain vigilant and continue to monitor impacts on our recruiting efforts. Despite the positive effect of the economy on recruiting, there remain other factors counterbalancing our ability to attract bright, young Americans into the Armed Forces—57 percent of influencers (e.g. parents and teachers) are not likely to recommend military service; a large and growing proportion of youth are ineligible to serve in the military; a higher number of youth going to college directly from high school; and continuing concerns about the multiple deployments and the high operations tempo.

In order to continue to sustain the AVF, the Department must rely on a significant and consistent recruiting effort across the Department. The consequences of sequestration increase risk for fiscal year 2013 recruiting and may result in fiscal year 2014 recruiting falling below levels needed. There is a possibility of a significant reduction in our ability to screen youth for military service during the potential civilian personnel furlough since the Military Entrance Processing Stations are manned to a large extent (approximately 80 percent) by civilian staff. The reductions to advertising and recruiting support will also likely be significant.

Active Duty Retention

During fiscal year 2012, the Active Force consistently exhibited strong retention numbers with Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines meeting their 2012 retention goals. Since the start of fiscal year 2013, through the fifth month of the fiscal year, the Army, Air Force, and Marine Corps have continued to exhibit strong retention numbers. The Navy has also exhibited strong retention numbers in the Mid-Career and Career categories, however, the Navy's achievement of 86–88 percent (during the first 5 months of fiscal year 2013) in the Initial category results from reduced accessions 4–6 years ago. The Navy's Initial category will continue to be monitored.

Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC)

The Department's largest single source of commissioned officers is the Reserve Officers' Training Corps (ROTC). In 2012, ROTC had 21,323 cadets and midshipmen on scholarship and commissioned 6,200 officers. This was accomplished while each Service also simultaneously reduced scholarship funding. The Services are currently working to further streamline their ROTC programs.

In order to continue these successes and sustain the officer corps, the Department must rely on consistent recruiting and scholarship programs. Almost 80 percent of the Services' ROTC budget is O&M. The consequence of sequestration is increased risk for fiscal year 2013 officer recruiting and scholarships programs. The reductions to civilian personnel, scholarships, advertising, and recruiting support may be significant.

Military Compensation

Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission

The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 established a Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission, which is required to undertake a comprehensive review of all forms of military pay and benefits. The Secretary of Defense will transmit his recommendations to the Commission and to Congress by November 2013. Then the Commission will make its appropriate recommendations to the President by May 2014. We remain committed to ensuring any proposed changes to the mix of pay and benefits keep faith with those who are serving today and with those who have served in the past, our retirees. Changes to the military compensation and retirement system should be considered along with military operational requirements and supporting our servicemembers and their families.

Military Pay Increase

In the fiscal year 2014 budget, DOD proposed increasing military basic pay by 1.0 percent, 0.8 percent less than the authorized increase in law. The pay raise proposal was a difficult decision reached by the senior leaders of the Department. The adjustment will save \$540 million in fiscal year 2014 and \$3.5 billion through fiscal year 2018. Military compensation compares favorably with compensation for American workers. Therefore, a 1.0 percent military basic pay increase should not significantly affect recruiting and retention. The foregone portion of the 0.8 percent increase to the member would be as follows:

- Corporal with 4 years of service, \$23.05 per month (\$277 ann.) before taxes.
- Captain (O-3) with 6 years of service, \$53.60 per month (\$643 ann.) before taxes.

We ask for Congress to support the administration's request of a 1.0 percent increase to military basic pay.

Basic Housing Allowance

The purpose of the Basic Allowance for Housing (BAH) program is to provide fair and equitable housing allowances to servicemembers. The \$20 billion annual program impacts more than 1 million servicemembers and their families. The 2013 BAH rates were set for every U.S. location based on measured housing costs in 363 military concentration areas. The Department conducted a comprehensive review of the size and number of areas surveyed to assess housing costs and set BAH rates.

Area boundaries have been modified to reflect current housing concentrations. Areas which no longer have a sizeable uniformed presence have been removed, and areas with overlapping populations have been combined, improving efficiency of the data collection process. Data collected in 2013 in these revised housing areas will be used to set 2014 BAH rates.

The Department is currently conducting a study to answer a congressionally-directed reporting requirement on the feasibility and appropriateness of paying BAH, rather than an Overseas Housing Allowance, in the U.S. territories. The Department is on track to submit its report by July 1, 2013.

Military Family Support

Family Advocacy Program

Managing relationship stress within married couples, domestic partners and between parents and children is challenging. Military service, with deployment, redeployment, and separation often exacerbates this stress which sometimes manifests as physical maltreatment and neglectful behavior. To meet the needs of our service-members and their families, the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) supports a coordinated community response strategy, which includes adequate funding, trained personnel, and an oversight framework.

Family Advocacy experts teamed with SAPRO and other DOD professionals in the development of a Special Victim Response capability to address the most serious domestic abuse and maltreatment incidents. Taking advantage of the expertise and research across government, the FAP convened a special working group in February 2013 with the Military Services and Federal partners to develop a 5-year Prevention Strategic Plan that identifies risk factors and strategies that will help stop domestic violence and child abuse and neglect before it starts.

In fiscal year 2012, we established a Multi-Functional Domestic Violence Data Working Group to develop a comprehensive management plan to track domestic violence incidents and address deficiencies in the Defense Incident-Based Reporting System, and other current systems, in response to the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2011 requirements.

Child Care

On December 20, 2012, then Defense Secretary Panetta ordered a thorough review of criminal background check and adjudication documentation for all DOD Child and Youth Services personnel in response to concerns raised at the Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall Child Development Center. The audit indicated the background check and adjudication process would benefit from standardizing the criminal background check adjudication process and adding a review of the installation's adjudication processes as a permanent part of the inspections of Child and Youth Service programs conducted annually per current policy. The Department is currently updating our policy instruction, DODI 1402.5 Criminal History Background Checks on Individuals In Child Care Services, which is currently under review. In order to expedite the process, we are working closely with law enforcement experts and with the Defense Civilian Personnel Advisory Service. The update will provide consistent guidance in regards to standardizing the procedures and adjudication of background checks for child care workers.

The Department has focused efforts on improving the quality and oversight of its child development and school age care programs. In cooperation with the military Services, a standardized framework of common standards is under development and planned for implementation in fiscal year 2014. The delivery of research-based training for child care staff and school-age program staff through web-based systems is in early implementation with piloting scheduled for the summer of 2013 and roll out in the fall of 2013.

Spouse Education and Career Opportunities

The DOD Spouse Education and Career Opportunities (SECO) program is a comprehensive suite of services, resources and connections for military spouses that provides assistance for their career lifecycle to include career exploration, education and training, and employment readiness, and career connections. Military spouses can receive information and counseling about careers, education, license and credentials, resume assistance and interview preparation from career counselors through the SECO Career Center. During fiscal year 2012, the Career Center for SECO supported more than 121,000 requests for SECO assistance.

Additionally, through the Career Center, spouses can create a career plan and directly connect with 162 corporate employers now participating in the Military Spouse Employment Partnership (MSEP). Since the launch of MSEP in June 2011, more than 40,000 military spouses have been hired by MSEP Partners.

Military OneSource

Military OneSource provides call center and web-based information, non-medical counseling, and educational materials. Services are available worldwide, 24 hours a day, at no cost to the user. In fiscal year 2012, Military OneSource responded to more than 750,000 telephone calls, distributed more than 3.7 million educational materials and assisted servicemembers and families with well over 200,000 Federal and State tax filings. Other services include relocation assistance, document translation, education resources, special needs consultation, elder care consultation, on-line library resources, and health and wellness coaching. Wounded warrior consultation services, accessed via Military OneSource, provide immediate assistance to recovering wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers, their families, and caregivers. In 2012, this service processed more than 17,000 calls and resolved more than 2,400 cases for wounded warriors.

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation Program

Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (MWR) programs throughout the Services provide a comprehensive network of quality support and recreation services to enhance the readiness and resilience of our servicemembers and their families. The following include some noteworthy updates to these services:

MWR Internet Café: Military spouses indicate that communication is the number one factor in coping with the stress of deployment. The Department now funds over 426 free MWR Internet Cafes in Afghanistan and the Middle East and 152 portable satellite units (known as MoraleSat or Cheetahs) to support remote combat locations. In fiscal year 2012, more than 82 million minutes of “talk time” were used to keep families in touch with deployed loved ones.

Tutor.com: Tutor.com has been a tremendous success with children and youth and their families, allowing students to be in touch with a live tutor to answer questions, as well as talk through the process of problem solving until students grasp the principle and concepts of whatever academic challenge they request assistance with. Tutor.com reports more than 600,000 tutoring sessions over the 3 years the program has been in existence.

Servicemember and Spouse Credentialing and Licensing Efforts

DOD is leading a government-wide effort to help servicemembers earn civilian credentials and licenses in order to receive appropriate recognition for their military training and experience. Currently, more than 3,000 servicemembers in approximately 25 military occupational codes are participating in credentialing and licensing initiatives.

The challenge in credentialing and licensing is that most national, State, and local credentialing and licensing agencies do not always recognize equivalent military training, education, and experience because they are unaccustomed to assessing these areas. They also often lack access to information that would allow them to better understand and evaluate military education, training and experience. The Department is working closely with the White House, and other Federal agencies such as: Veterans Affairs, Department of Labor, Department of Transportation and Department of Education; State governments; professional organizations, and affinity groups to address these challenges.

During the last 12 months we have made significant progress. For example, 37 States now grant waivers of the Commercial Drivers Licenses driving skills test for veterans and servicemembers. Currently more than 24 States are pursuing legislative changes which will further reduce barriers to licensing at the State level. The First Lady and Dr. Biden, through Joining Forces, have been key proponents of licensure and credentialing for both separating servicemembers and military spouses. They presented both the military spouses and separating servicemember licensure issue at the National Governor's Association (NGA) meeting in February 2013. As of March 2013, 29 States have passed legislation expediting the professional licensing process for military spouses. Another 13 States currently have active legislation in expediting licenses. Professional licensing generally covers most occupations, with the exception of teachers and attorneys. Health related professions (physicians assistants, nurses, radiologist, dentists and dental techs), and commercially oriented professions (CPAs, architects, engineers) are also included. Seventeen States have statutes allowing credit for military education (credit towards licensing and academic degrees for substantially equivalent military education, training and experience), training and experience towards professional licensing for transitioning servicemembers; another 22 States have active legislation in this area.

Defense Commissary Agency

The Defense commissary system enhances the quality of life of members of the uniformed services, retired members, and their dependents while supporting military readiness, recruitment and retention. The commissary continues to be one of the most valued non-pay compensation benefits enjoyed by our military members and families, be they Active, Guard and Reserve, or retirees. Commissary shoppers save an average of 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial retailers. This equates to a potential savings of about \$4,500 per year for a family of four, or more than \$1,500 annually for a single servicemember.

Beyond grocery savings, the commissary system provides a paycheck to many military families. Military spouses account for more than 4,000 of DeCA's 15,130 civilian employees in the United States, about 27 percent of the commissary's U.S. workforce. Military dependents, Guard and Reserve members, retirees, and other veterans provide an additional 37 percent of the U.S. workforce.

Challenges from sequestration would reduce military families' access to commissary savings, because commissaries may need to accommodate potential furlough of its civilian employees. While we believe most commissary patrons will move their shopping trips to other available days, we estimate that military families who migrate their shopping to commercial retailers would spend significantly more on their food bills during the remainder of fiscal year 2013.

Dependent Education

Ensuring excellence in the education of military children is a top priority for the Department of Defense. There are approximately 1.2 million school-aged children with a parent serving in the military. More than 84,300 of these children attend one of the schools operated by the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA). To this end, DODEA is leaning forward to provide an educational experience that challenges each student to maximize his or her potential and prepares them to be successful, productive and contributing citizens in today's global economy. Highlighted below are some significant accomplishments to transform schools.

- **Common Core State Educational Standards:** DODEA joins 46 States and the District of Columbia in adopting the Common Core State Educational Standards. For our military-connected students, these standards will change the education experience from a patchwork of various State standards as they move from State to State to one that will be as close to academically seamless as possible.
- **Digital Conversion:** To prepare classrooms for the infusion of technology into teaching and learning, DODEA upgraded the bandwidth and wireless infrastructure in all 194 schools.
- **College and Career Readiness:** DODEA increased the mathematics graduation requirements, expanded course offerings in the areas of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM), foreign language and Advanced Placement. The Virtual High School has increased course offerings by an average of 13 courses per year.
- **Early Reading Success:** DODEA adopted a goal to ensure all students are reading on grade level by grade 3. This included the implementation of a new early childhood reading assessment which now is administered in kindergarten versus third grade, past longstanding practice. First year reading results showed promising gains.
- **School Facility Recapitalization and Repair:** In 2009, 134 of DODEA's 194 schools were rated below the DOD acceptable facility condition standard. The substandard schools were safe but too costly to maintain with routine improvements. Of the original 134 substandard schools, DODEA has completed 9 schools, has an additional 12 schools under construction, and 51 schools in design. DODEA is on target to meet the goal of bringing all schools to the DOD acceptable condition standard by the end of fiscal year 2018.
- **Educational Outreach:** Since 2008, DODEA awarded nearly \$200 million in grants to over 150 military-connected public school districts reaching more than 280,000 military-connected children in 900 public schools. These grants help non-DOD schools improve educational opportunities for military children in public schools.

The effects of sequestration could potentially delay the educational transformations, resulting in significant implementation delays, in some areas by as much as 2 years, e.g., in the area of new curriculum adoptions, digital classroom conversions, and employment reform (e.g. new processes for recruiting, hiring, evaluating, interviewing and on-boarding of new educator hires). However, the Depart-

ment is making every effort to ensure military-connected children attending DOD schools are provided full academic years and that schools maintain accreditation standards.

Total Force Management

We are committed to ensuring the Department's mix of Active and Reserve military, government civilians, and contracted services provide our commanders with the capabilities and readiness they require. The Department recently issued guidance that reiterated and re-enforced key total force management concepts. Specifically, the Department is committed to precluding inappropriate transfer for work to the private sector from government performance (especially work that is inherently governmental or critical). As the Department executes civilian workforce reductions, implements a hiring freeze, releases term/temporary employees, and faces civilian potential furloughs our managers and commanders must ensure that workload is not being inappropriately absorbed by the private sector in violation of our title 10 obligations.

The Department's implementation of NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, section 955, requiring reduction in funding for civilians and contract support commensurate to reduction in funding associated with end-strength reductions, will be done in a manner that reduces mission impact and mitigates risk to programs and operations, while maintaining core capabilities and support to our warfighters and their families. We will ensure that our Total Force is sized and shaped to perform the functions and activities necessary to enable our capabilities and achieve our missions.

Civilian Hiring Freeze and Furloughs

One of the highest profile effects of sequestration is the potential furlough of the majority of the Department's 800,000 civilians. Notification of the Department's intent was sent to Congress and to the civilian workforce on February 20. The Department will apply furlough actions in a consistent and equitable manner, with few exceptions based on unique mission requirements.

The potential furloughs will be disruptive and damaging to our ability to carry out the defense mission. We anticipate morale and financial effects on our valued civilian employees, a decline in productivity, and a potential loss of critical civilian talent in high demand fields; e.g., cyber, intelligence, and information technology.

In order to address the severe across the board cuts, the Department has also implemented, with limited exceptions, a civilian hiring freeze and has started releasing temporary and term employees. These actions put the Department further at risk of competency gaps and critical skill shortages in key mission critical areas. In fiscal year 2012, the Department hired almost 60,000 new employees to meet mission requirements. Of these employee hires, approximately 47 percent were veterans, a community with unique skills sets valuable to the Department. This hiring does not occur just in the Washington, DC, area, therefore the ramification of these actions ripples beyond the walls of the Pentagon and will be felt well outside the Beltway. In fact, the vast majority of the Department's civilian workforce, almost 86 percent, works outside the Washington, DC, area. The loss of key skill sets effect our communities throughout the country.

Strategic Human Capital Plan and Critical Skills Gaps

The fiscal year 2010–2014 DOD Strategic Workforce Plan (SWP) was submitted to Congress in March 2012. The plan detailed progress made, present and future challenges, and strategies in place for shaping the demographics of a ready civilian workforce. The fiscal year 2014–2018 DOD SWP, in development, expands the SWP framework and functional community structure to cover all 274 major occupations covering over 90 percent of the workforce.

The Strategic Workforce Plan is an integral tool for informing the Department's policies and procedures for recruitment, retirement and accession planning, professional training and education, and retention in order to guard against a skill shortfall or erosion of competencies as workforce actions are implemented.

Contractor Services Accountability and Integration

Contracted Services represent the efforts of private firm employees performing identifiable tasks for the Department rather than producing/manufacturing end items of supply. In 2010, Secretary Gates issued a directive to reduce certain staff augmentation contract services, particularly at headquarters staffs, by 10 percent a year over the next 3 years. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012 limited contract spending to fiscal year 2010. While the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2012 directed reductions in spending on those services performing closely associated with inherently governmental work and staff augmentation, section 955 of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 further requires reductions in total funding.

The Department is currently able to estimate, through its Inventory of Contracts for Services, a like unit of measure of contractor effort to compare to civilian full-time equivalents and military end strength. The inventory for fiscal year 2011, submitted to Congress this past summer, was the most comprehensive to date. The most recent inventory estimates approximately 710,000 contractor full-time equivalents and \$144.5 billion. We are now further improving visibility into, and accountability of, contract services by collecting direct labor hours and associated cost data from contractors, which can then be compared to our civilians and military workforce planning factors.

HEALTH AFFAIRS

We are committed to providing the quality healthcare to our beneficiaries while ensuring fiscal responsibility. Our highest priority is to keep our servicemembers healthy and medically ready for deployment anywhere in the world. We must also ensure a ready medical force that can provide contemporary healthcare wherever it is required. We have a special obligation to our wounded warriors and their care will continue uninterrupted regardless of any fiscal challenges.

Healthcare Costs

Rising health care costs are a serious challenge for the Department. In 1996, when TRICARE was fully implemented, a working age retiree's family of three contributed, on average, roughly 27 percent of the total cost of health care. Today that percentage has dropped to less than 11 percent. Health care costs have grown substantially since 1996, while retiree's family's out of pocket expenses, including enrollment fees, deductibles and cost shares, has only grown by 30 to 40 percent. The Department seeks to rebalancing the cost-sharing borne by military retirees. Even with our current proposals, cost-shares borne by retired military families are still less than what they experienced in 1996.

Therefore, the Department is seeking further changes to the TRICARE program in the fiscal year 2014 budget as follows:

- Increase the TRICARE Prime enrollment fee (using a fee ceiling/floor structure), instituting an enrollment fee for TRICARE Standard/Extra, and increasing Standard/Extra deductibles, and adjusting the catastrophic cap to exclude enrollment fees. These changes will affect only retirees.
- Increase co-pays for pharmaceuticals (excludes Active Duty service-members).
- Implement an enrollment fee for new TRICARE-for-Life (TFL) beneficiaries (grandfathers those already Medicare-eligible at enactment).

These fee changes will be phased-in over several years, and fees/deductibles/Rx co-pays/catastrophic cap levels will be indexed to growth in annual retiree cost-of-living adjustment (COLA). Even after the proposed changes in TRICARE fees, the TRICARE benefit will remain one of the best medical benefits in the United States, with lower out-of-pocket costs than most other employers. We ask for congressional support for our proposed cost savings initiatives in the fiscal year 2014 President's budget that require legislation in order to be implemented.

The Department is also working on other ways to ensure the financial viability of TRICARE for far into the future. In 2008 and 2009, with the support of Congress, the Department instituted a number of changes that have had positive effects in slowing the rise of health care costs. We established "Federal Ceiling Prices" that required pharmaceutical manufacturers to provide the Department discounts for drugs provided to TRICARE beneficiaries through retail network pharmacies (saving almost \$800 million annually) and we changed how we reimburse private hospitals for outpatient services provided to TRICARE (saving over \$900 million annually by 2014 when this is fully implemented).

The Department is in the process of revising its payment rules to reimburse inpatient care claims at sole community hospitals by using Medicare rates (saving \$100 million annually when fully implemented). To further reduce costs, the Department is changing how it buys medical products, by leveraging the bulk buying power of the military health system. A series of strategic price reduction initiatives are being implemented, saving the Department on average, \$60 million annually. The Department is reducing administrative overhead in the military health system by streamlining its processes; reducing the number of unnecessary reports, studies and Commissions; and initiating other actions which will result in over \$200 million in reduced personnel and contract costs annually.

The Department has instituted an active and ongoing process designed to prevent, detect, and control fraud and abuse. We expect these efforts on average will avoid costs and recover overpayments of \$50 million annually over the next 5 years. In

effort to control long-term costs, the Department is pursuing a multifaceted strategy to invest in initiatives that keep beneficiaries well, promote healthy lifestyles, and reduce inappropriate emergency room visits and unnecessary hospitalizations while improving patient satisfaction. In the short term, we expect savings on average of over \$25 million over the next 5 years.

Also with Congress' support, we have made small strides in ensuring our health benefit, while remaining one of the finest health benefits provided by any employer in the country, is managed in a manner that ensures the long-term strength of the Military Health System. We now require new enrollees to the U.S. Family Health Plan to move to the TRICARE for Life (TFL) Program upon becoming eligible for Medicare, like all other military retirees (saving \$600 million annually); Congress has permitted small increases in the TRICARE Prime enrollment fees for working age retirees and some adjustments to retail and mail-order pharmacy co-pays.

Defense Health Agency

In 2013, the Department will move forward with significant changes in how we govern the Military Health System, consistent with the direction provided by the Deputy Secretary of Defense in 2012 and by Congress in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013. The following three major steps are now being formalized within the Department.

First, we are establishing a Defense Health Agency (DHA) with responsibility for administering shared services across the Department's military health portfolio. We will achieve Initial Operating Capability for the DHA by October 1, 2013.

Second, we are providing enhanced authorities for military medical leaders in our largest, multi-Service medical markets (National Capital Region; Portsmouth, VA; Colorado Springs, CO; San Antonio, TX; Puget Sound, WA; and Honolulu, HI) to ensure we best utilize our military medical resources in the community, improve access to care, and lower costs. We will also use these medical readiness platforms to identify best practices and institute more standardized approaches to both clinical and administrative processes.

Finally, we are also transitioning the Joint Task Force-National Capital Regional Medical to a directorate within the Defense Health Agency. This transition will sustain the joint organizational structure of the two inpatient medical facilities in the NCR, clarify accountability for comprehensive market management, and allow the MHS to reduce intermediate headquarters overhead for managing the market.

Collectively, we believe the actions will have a substantive effect on improving readiness, improving the health of our population, improving the health care delivered in our medical facilities, and reduce the rate of growth in our health care costs.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury

An estimated 13 to 20 percent of over 2.6 million servicemembers who deployed have or may develop Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) symptoms. From 2000 to 2012, 125,592 servicemembers were formally diagnosed with PTSD in military treatment facilities. PTSD is treatable, and servicemembers can expect to recover with appropriate medication and/or psychotherapy. Current surveillance approach to identify servicemembers with PTSD includes annual periodic health assessments, pre-deployment health assessments, and post-deployment health assessments and reassessments. Treatment of PTSD is most effective with early and accurate diagnosis. The DOD has increased mental health staffing by 35 percent over the last 3 years, and has moved to embed mental health providers within primary care clinics and line units to increase access. New PTSD virtual reality tools, web-based and mobile applications, have expanded tele-health services to increase access to care.

Not all those with PTSD symptoms are diagnosed. Estimates suggest that 23–40 percent of those who need services do not receive care. While symptoms of PTSD usually present shortly following a traumatic event, for some individuals, PTSD symptoms will present months or years later. To address this, DOD is integrating behavioral health at the primary care level through system-wide expansion of screening through the Re-Engineering Systems of Primary Care Treatment in the Military (RESPECT-Mil) program and care provision through the Behavioral Health Optimization Program (BHOP).

The DOD is actively engaged with the VA and HHS in support of the implementation of Executive order, "Improving Access to Mental Health Services for Veterans, Servicemembers, and Military Families" (August 2012). The DOD/VA Integrated Mental Health Strategies (IMHS) continues to serve as a mechanism to identify joint actions to address common mental health needs.

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) is a signature injury of the Operation Enduring Freedom/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OEF/OIF) conflicts. TBI occurs on a continuum from mild TBI, or concussion, to severe and penetrating; severe TBIs are relatively

easy to detect, whereas mild TBIs are usually less obvious. DOD mandated the new in-theater DOD Instruction 6490.11 (DODI), "DOD Policy Guidance for Management of Mild Traumatic Brain Injury/Concussion in the Deployed Setting," in September 2012. This new policy emphasizes the importance of the early detection of servicemembers with concussion, while providing clear and specific guidelines for the management of acute concussions.

Since implementation of theater-wide policies, approximately 14,226 servicemembers were screened for concussion following potentially concussive events in theater (August 2010 to July 2012). Of those screened, approximately 15.2 percent (2,162) were diagnosed with concussion/mild TBI, which has been a consistent percentage over last 5 years. The Department emphasizes access to and quality of TBI care and TBI research (\$674 million invested since 2007), with focus on development of tools, treatments, and studies that follow TBI patients over time to understand the course of the condition.

Wounded Warrior Care

The care of our wounded warriors and the support they and their families receive as they recover and transition back to military or civilian life is our highest priority. Despite any fiscal constraints, the Department faces due to sequestration, our continued focus on their world class medical treatment, mental health, rehabilitation, and when feasible entry to military service, will continue unabated. We will work together with Services, advocates, and non-medical care managers to ensure we better identify and address non-medical needs of recovering servicemembers, their families, and caregivers. Our wounded warriors and their families who care for them deserve the very best, no matter what, for their sacrifice.

The Integrated Disability Evaluation System

The Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) integrated two large, separate, and sequential systems, which had existed since the 1940s and required more than 540 days for a servicemember to navigate. The DOD and VA completed fielding IDES at 139 Military Treatment Facilities in September 2011. The Departments met all IDES objectives: the new process is fairer, faster, and provides VA benefits more quickly than before. We took several steps in 2012 to improve performance, including increasing IDES staff by 127 percent (676 personnel), testing information technology capabilities that eliminate mailing paper records, increasing policy flexibility and pilot testing the use of cohort groups to accelerate simpler cases.

The Department recently concluded a preliminary study of the feasibility of consolidating the disability evaluation system across all Services to further ensure consistency of ratings and determinations. Additional analysis is required to fully understand implications to servicemembers, Service missions and resource impacts. In addition, we recently concluded a study of Physical Evaluation Board Liaison Officers (PEBLOs) addressing responsibilities, standard training objectives, and workload. Further analysis will provide insight into the necessary ratio of PEBLO to servicemember to improve communication and servicemember satisfaction with the disability evaluation system.

DOD is working closely with VA to better integrate processes, tools, and share lessons learned. As an example, DOD and VA are piloting an electronic case file transfer capability to eliminate mailing hardcopy records between departments. With the implementation of Health Artifact Image Management System, DOD and VA will electronically share Service treatment records. The Army, which represents 76 percent of the disability caseload, has committed to issuing electronic DD 214 for all their cases by December 31, 2013.

RESERVE AFFAIRS

Today, a combination of factors change the way we view the utilization of our Reserve component (RC) in the future and constitute a "new normal." A volatile international security environment still persists, and a constrained Defense budget for the foreseeable future will place additional burdens on the training, equipping, recruiting and retention to the Total Force in fiscal year 2014 and out. Therefore, use of the Reserve component as part of the operational total force makes business sense.

The Reserve component, as part of the Department's Total Force, provides the ability to preserve many capabilities and capacity at reduced long-term cost within manageable risk. Over the last decade the Reserve and National Guard units have clearly proven the ability to accomplish any assigned mission overseas or at home. During that time the Reserve component has become an integral part of the Nation's military force participating in nearly every mission worldwide. Today's Reserve component is a force multiplier which provides access and flexibility at an in-

credible value allowing the Services to utilize full capabilities in an operational capacity while retaining strategic depth. Today's Citizen Warriors have made a conscious decision to serve since September 11, with full knowledge that their decisions mean periodic recalls to active duty under arduous and hazardous conditions. They will continue to play a vital role as we move beyond the past decade of war in Iraq and Afghanistan and the Department shapes the force to implement defense strategy and to respond to the challenges of a new era.

The Department's National Guard and Reserve servicemembers totaling about 1.1 million contribute 43 percent of our total military end strength at a cost of 9 percent of the total base budget and continue to fulfill their vital national security role. The National Guard and Reserve provide trained, ready, and cost-effective forces that can be employed on a regular operational basis, while also ensuring strategic depth for large-scale contingencies or other unanticipated national crises. As of mid-March 2013, there are 53,658 servicemembers activated. Over the past decade, over 869,877 Reserve and National Guard servicemembers have deployed.

Recruiting

Success in recruiting is essential to maintain the strength necessary for the Reserve components to achieve their assigned missions. Like the Active component, the Reserve component also continues to access high quality recruits. Each of the six Reserve components has exceeded departmental benchmarks for recruit quality. For the remainder of the fiscal year, these trends are expected to continue. Five of the six Reserve components have met their fiscal year-to-date accession missions through February 2013. However, as the economy improves, competition for high quality Reserve recruits will increase and recruiting missions will become more difficult to achieve. Although as the Active component continues to reduce end strength, some Active component members may choose to continue service in the Reserve component.

Attrition

Retention of high quality Reserve component servicemembers continues to remain a high priority. While the Reserve components have seen a slight increase in attrition over fiscal year 2012, all Reserve components are currently within the departmental targets. The aggregate fiscal year-to-date departmental attrition rate was 5.12 percent in fiscal year 2012 and is currently at 5.97 percent. Improved opportunities in the civilian world affect our ability to retain some of our best and brightest. We will continue to monitor our Reserve component attrition posture closely.

Family and Transition Support

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

In the past 12 months, the Services conducted 1,855 Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) events that provided vital family deployment, non-medical mental health, and family readiness support resources to 233,820 servicemembers, family members or designated representatives. The Services are projecting 1,691 events for fiscal year 2013 in support of continued operations in Afghanistan and other theater security and humanitarian missions around the globe.

YRRP continues to develop policies, tools, and resources necessary for the Services to address challenges faced by Guard and Reserve families, as well as those stemming from the evolving nature of military operations. YRRP is developing online curriculum to assist event planners with the unique challenges of multiple deployments, geographically dispersed families and reintegration/unemployment issues; refining metrics collection and analysis to continually measure and improve the long-term effectiveness and efficiency of the program. We are also working with partners like the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, to include the VA and the NIH's Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to expand suicide prevention resources and community healing opportunities; and working with the Services to develop flexible, long-term policies for the future of deployment cycle support.

The YRRP compliments Transition Assistance Program (TAP) by assisting National Guard and Reserve members as they transition between their military and civilian roles. YRRP events provide National Guard and Reserve members with access to local information on health care, education/training opportunities, and financial/legal benefits. In addition, up to 30 resource providers also participate at YRRP-sponsored events, including the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Labor, the Small Business Administration, Military Family Life Consultants, Chaplains, certified financial planners, Military OneSource consultants, Red Cross representatives, and employment transition coordinators.

Hero2Hired (H2H.jobs)

Hero2Hired (H2H) is a comprehensive YRRP career readiness program with both a high touch and a high tech approach designed to connect Reserve component members with potential employers. A robust IT platform supports Guard and Reserve members with significant features including a Military Occupational Specialty skills translator, a case management feature, job search capabilities (by profession, geographic location, company), resume builder, mobile application and a career skills assessment. Since its launch in December 2011, H2H.jobs has signed up more than 113,383 job seekers and more than 15,517 employers. The program engages the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve network of 4900 volunteers along with 56 contracted Employment Transition Coordinators (ETC) within all 50 States, Territories, and the District of Columbia to provide servicemembers with employment assistance in their local communities.

Partnership and Outreach

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve

Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) is a DOD organization created in 1972 to foster a culture in which all employers support and value the employment and military service of members of the National Guard and Reserve in the United States. ESGR's mission is particularly relevant in an era of increased reliance on the Reserve Component to conduct worldwide combat operations and provide humanitarian response. The ESGR Customer Service Center (CSC) provides Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act (USERRA) information and mediation support to servicemembers and their civilian employers. In fiscal year 2012, ESGR answered more than 21,000 USERRA inquiries and mediated almost 2,800 USERRA cases resolving over 77 percent of the cases in less than 9 calendar days. As a result of sequestration, there may be a reduction in awareness of ESGR programs and USERRA rights and responsibilities due to a reduction in outreach efforts.

National Guard Youth Challenge Program

The Department includes funding for the National Guard Youth Challenge Program in fiscal year 2014. The budget request will support 35 programs located in 27 States, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. The 17-month program consists of two phases (residential and post-residential) and serves 16–18-year olds who are not attending high school and unemployed. The residential program is 22 weeks long and it stresses academic excellence, leadership and followership, citizenship, community service, life coping skills, job skills, physical fitness, and health and hygiene. The post-residential mentoring period is 12 months long. It is designed to assist/support the residential graduates as they return to secondary school, continue on to college or vocational learning institutions, or enter the job market. Since the program's inception in 1993, over 120,000 participants have graduated, contributed over 8 million hours of service to communities that is valued at over \$155 million and approximately 70 percent of the program graduates have earned academic credentials such as a GED, High School diploma, or high school credit recovery certification. The budget request plans to support DOD's cost share of 75 percent of the program's operating costs in order to graduate approximately 9,000 program participants annually.

DOD–VA COLLABORATION

To fulfill the sacred responsibility of caring for those who have fought for our country, close and effective collaboration between DOD and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is essential. While there is no doubt that DOD and VA are working more closely together than ever before, it is also clear that we need to reach an even deeper level of cooperation to better meet the needs of those who have served our Nation in uniform, especially our wounded warriors. It is a great priority for P&R to continue to strive to achieve our joint vision of a seamless “single system experience of lifetime services.”

Working together, our Departments have already made many important changes to our system of care for wounded warriors, servicemembers, veterans, and their families. But clearly, there is considerably more work to be done, particularly to meet the needs of the post-September 11 generation of warriors. It is critically important that we overcome the bureaucratic processes of the past—and therefore we are working to implement major changes in several areas that together will dramatically improve the quality of the services DOD and VA are able to provide.

Integrated Electronic Health Records (iEHR)

The DOD and VA remain committed to implement full health data interoperability. The DOD and VA together support more than 17 million beneficiaries. Transitioning health care for servicemembers from one large health care system to the other involves the precise exchange of data. Therefore, in order to accelerate availability of seamless health care information, DOD and VA will modify the strategy for developing the iEHR. To reduce the cost and technical risk that an entirely new system would present, DOD and VA agreed to use a “core” set of applications from existing EHR technology, which could be added to additional modules or applications as necessary. The Department is committed to the implementation of iEHR and will work with VA fast-track standardized technical and clinical capabilities.

We believe our current strategy will achieve our goals for the electronic health record system: reduce costs, shorten the timeline, reduce risk, and increase capability. We remain focused on healthcare data interoperability between the DOD and VA to ensure that we improve the quality of care per dollar spent for our servicemembers, veterans, and beneficiaries as they move within the DOD, VA, and private sector health care systems.

VA Claims Backlog

Veterans’ benefits are a vital extension of a holistic benefits package to sustain an AVF. Therefore, we are fully engaged in the issue of Veterans Disability Benefits Claims backlog. We will provide VA with any information we have which will assist them with processing claims and help eliminate the backlog. We currently provide approximately 98 percent of the required personnel data for claims adjudication with VA electronically, and we continue to seek how to close the gap on the remainder. We have provided VA access to all personnel (including available DD Form 214) records through a DOD web portal, and we have agreed to provide Veterans Benefits Administration employees with direct access to our electronic medical record system. We will continue to look for ways to assist VA in lowering the backlog.

We have taken several steps to reduce backlog such as having a team of DOD subject matter experts at the Veterans Benefits Administration to analyze problematic cases in the VA backlog and conducting a uniform Separation Health Assessment for all servicemembers at the time of separation from the military. VA will conduct the assessment for those who request disability benefits at the time of separation; DOD will conduct the assessment for all others. We have already begun to implement this at some locations, and we will complete implementation by the end of fiscal year 2014. This will assist VA down the road as it will establish a baseline medical condition at the time of separation which the VA can use to determine service connection of future disability claims.

CONCLUSION

During the past decade, the men and women who comprise the All-Volunteer Force have shown versatility, adaptability, and commitment, enduring the constant stress and strain of fighting two overlapping conflicts. Throughout it all, we were able to build, support and transition the finest military ever known. We understand that in order for us to continue on this path, we must be vigilant in our efforts and resources to ensure that we provide all the necessary recruiting, training, support and transition tools for success. The Department is committed to our servicemembers’ success. Whether it is on the battlefield, at home with their families, or after they have faithfully concluded their military service, we are committed to preparing servicemembers for whatever challenges they may face from warrior to veteran. They deserve no less.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you to each of you for your testimony and for your service. I am extremely grateful to all of you.

I would like to start with Dr. Woodson first. Last year, several of us fought very hard to have TRICARE cover the applied behavioral analysis (ABA) therapy. It is a behavioral therapy for autistic children and children with development disabilities. I am disappointed that the pilot program we funded is delayed by 3 months by sequestration, but in any case, I have not seen details on how it will be rolled out.

A number of the children covered in the Extended Care Health Option (ECHO) Program for Active Duty do not receive adequate

services due to caps on funding. Will the pilot program have caps on services?

Dr. WOODSON. Thanks very much for the question and your support of the men and women in the service and retirees and beneficiaries.

As it relates to the ABA pilot, a couple of things need to be brought forward. First of all, we could not start the pilot until we have an appropriations bill, and that did not happen until March 26. But almost virtually on that day we pushed out information to providers so that they could start answering questions from potential beneficiaries relative to this service.

We have mapped out the program. We have started writing the contracts for the program, and just the contracting issues require time, and because we could not start the program before March 26, 2013, there is that obvious delay.

But let me just say that since last summer, non-active duty beneficiaries have been able to receive ABA therapy through the TRICARE basic medical program. That is not capped, so that has been available since last summer. Of course now we are setting up the pilot.

So the bottom line is we have multiple ways of paying for ABA, and, in fact, historically, we have been in front of the pack. We have been providing this for Active Duty family members for over 10 years. So we are moving with all due haste to set up the program, but we did have some limitations relative to the appropriation.

Senator GILLIBRAND. ECHO currently only covers certified consultants, leaving many locations without adequate coverage. Will the pilot program cover ABA technicians and assistant behavioral analysts?

Dr. WOODSON. The pilot certainly will cover the technicians. These are the non-certified tutors, which is the other name that is used, the pilot will cover those individuals.

Senator GILLIBRAND. The last piece, in July 2012, we provided a lot of the data that the military was asking for, medical data, demonstrating the benefits of ABA coverage. When this review of data is complete, can we then ensure that there will be permanent ABA coverage under TRICARE?

Dr. WOODSON. Well, right now it is covered under TRICARE basic medical program. Since we always follow the law, if the law says we have to provide it, we will provide it irrespective of what the data says. So that is not an issue.

Senator GILLIBRAND. That is contrary to what we heard in the last hearing on this topic. They said it was not a medical treatment. They said it was an educational treatment, and so, therefore, they were able to cap the access to the number of therapies that could be received because it was not considered medical.

Dr. WOODSON. Good question, and we should draw the point of clarification that if it was left to our discretion, we would probably define it still as an educational benefit. But the law says that we have to provide it, so we will provide it.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But if it is defined as educational, it only requires a certain number of therapy sessions. So what the families have told us is that they were literally doing second mortgages on

their homes or going through bankruptcy because to be able to afford all the therapies their doctor prescribed for their children. It was a financial burden that they could not cover.

Dr. WOODSON. Once again, since this summer, under the basic program, families can receive ABA therapy. That is not capped if a certified provider delivers it. So it is there for them right now.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. Turning to Secretary Wright, we held our last hearing on sexual assault in the military. There has been a lot of attention drawn to the issue, largely because of the Invisible War documentary. One of the things that we discussed in the hearing was that when reporting is made, it is made throughout the chain of command, and the disposition authority sits within the chain of command, and that that may, in fact, undermine reporting, because if we have 19,000 sexual assault cases and only 2,500 roughly are reported, and of that 2,500, only 240 going to trial, and only 190 convictions, you are really seeing only one out of 100 convictions happening for every 100 alleged cases.

So my question to you is, if we shift the disposition authority away from the chain of command and actually make that decision-making process be a responsibility of, let us say, the JAG corps, the specific prosecutors who are trained on sexual assault, what do you think the impact of that will be? Do you think it would affect good order and discipline?

Ms. WRIGHT. Well, ma'am, you are right. The 19,000 is an extrapolation from the survey that we did in 2010, I believe. We are soon to send to Congress the new sexual assault report which will be the end of the month, which will clarify more recent numbers. So the 19,000 and the chain of command, I would say that the chain of command is really for good order and discipline, and I speak from experience because I am a retired general officer.

I do understand the issues with sexual assault, and I think the reporting could have something to do with the chain of command, but I also think it has something to do with the stigma or the risk of reporting, so I think it is not just an area related to the chain of command. I would hazard to say to take it out of the chain of command, though I will tell you that Secretary Hagel is taking this extremely seriously. I have a meeting with his office tomorrow morning to talk about more measures that we can take—remember he just did the Article 60—more measures that he could take to put more teeth into what the Department is doing.

So I will tell you, ma'am, that everything is on the table because I think his aperture is wide to solve this problem.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I have a concern that you just said having 19,000 sexual assaults a year represents good order and discipline.

Ms. WRIGHT. No, ma'am. I think the chain of command is what represents the good order and discipline.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But we have the chain of command, and it is the disposition authority, and you still have 19,000 sexual assaults.

Ms. WRIGHT. That is an extrapolation from the survey—

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay. So maybe you have 15,000. Maybe you have 12,000. Maybe you have 10,000. Maybe you have 5,000. Maybe you have the 2,400 that are reported. I do not believe 2,400 sexual assaults and rapes every year is good order and discipline.

Honestly, I think if you are going to stick to that line, you will undermine your credibility enormously because you are not getting it done. You are not assuring the safety of men and women who are serving and giving their lives for this country from rape from their colleagues. So you cannot say the chain of command is assuring good order and discipline because you are failing.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am, I agree with you that 19,000, to 1, is way too many, and that we have a problem, and that we need to do better. I agree with you 100 percent, and that I am doing everything in my power, and the Joint Chiefs are also working very diligently to correct this problem.

Men and women join our ranks to serve our country, and they join our ranks because they want to protect this country. This is a place where they should feel safe. This is a place where they should never, ever, ever have a problem of feeling unsafe. They should never have a problem of wondering whether they would be sexually assaulted, whether they were a man or a woman. I agree with you 100 percent. Whether the number is 19,000 or one, that is way too many for any period of time in our military.

I do believe that the chain of command is a worthwhile organization.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We are not talking about the chain of command. I am talking about them having a specific responsibility called disposition authority. Already Secretary Hagel feels very comfortable taking away the responsibility of the disposition authority to be able to overturn a verdict. That is a big change. He feels no problem making that change.

What I am asking you to consider is if we make the change to say, you also are no longer going to have the ability to decide whether the facts that are put before you are worthy of going to trial because, number one, you are not trained as a prosecutor. Number two, you may not have any background in sexual assault and rape. Number three, you may have a relationship with a perpetrator or the victim. Number four, you are not in the position to be objective.

Ms. WRIGHT. Ma'am, all of those are very good points. To my initial comment, Secretary Hagel has everything now on the table since he decided on Article 60, which was a very big step, and a very important step, and a very needed step. Since he decided on that, I have a meeting with him tomorrow morning to give him more ideas, and that is on the table to take it away from the chain of command.

So we are—yes, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. My time has expired, but I will leave you with this. Senator Graham made very good points in our last hearing on sexual assault. He went through the number of cases when, in fact, Article 60 was used to overturn a case. It was extremely rare. It was one out of many, many, many cases. It was so uncommon.

If Secretary Hagel believes that that made a difference, I think that is a very good first step. But if it is so rare, I do not think that alone will change people's interest in reporting. I do not think it will change people's assessment of whether they will receive jus-

tice. I do not think it will change people's assessment of whether they think it is safe to report to their commanding officer.

I would like you to make sure when you say everything is on the table that you really mean it.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Because so far every person in the military that I have spoken to defends this one little responsibility that has not—that has only recently been elevated to someone higher up the chain of command, so it is not as if this person has had this authority for very long. It is really since the last NDAA we passed. So it is not something that has been set in stone forever and a day.

I think if you say everything is on the table, you should look at the whole structure because that is really what needs to be looked at.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Senator GILLIBRAND. There is a reason why people are not reporting.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am. I will guarantee you that we are looking at the whole structure.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Senator Ayotte?

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you. I appreciate your passion on this really important issue, Madam Chairman. This is an issue that is a bipartisan issue that we are concerned about making sure that when our men and women in uniform are victims of sexual assault, that they understand that when they come forward, they will receive justice. They will receive support. It seems that they should—to make sure—my background is as a prosecutor before this, so I appreciate your passion for this and really the pursuit of this in open hearings and having a very important dialogue on how we can address this problem.

I wanted to ask you, Secretary Wright, about the National Guard Youth Challenge Program. I think the National Guard Youth Challenge Program is very important. We—Senator Landrieu, myself, and three other Senators—sent you a letter that cited concerns we have about the Office of Secretary of Defense's (OSD) role in managing the National Guard Youth Challenge Program.

One of the concerns that we have is that I do not understand why, when we had a good program run by the National Guard Bureau (NGB) that OSD felt the need to enter into a technical assistance contract from OSD rather than letting that control remain in the NGB. So can you help me explain why you did that?

Second, I also want to understand why we are not really looking at sufficiently funding to maintain national training standards as required by the cooperative agreement.

Ms. WRIGHT. I can tell you that the Youth Challenge Program is a phenomenal program. I agree with you totally. It takes youth at risk and it turns them into clearly prosperous citizens, and have been doing it for years.

The NGB was in that decision to have that technical contract at OSD. It was a gentleman that was part of the program named Lou Cabrera who works with the Chief of the NGB. He was working with the OSD staff for that technical contract, and we kept it in OSD Reserve Affairs.

We have an oversight role in OSD Reserve Affairs for the Youth Challenge Program, and so that is why we kept it there. But we did not do it independently at all. We did it in concert with the NGB.

Senator AYOTTE. So the NGB actually supported basically reducing—I mean, one of the responsibilities we have is to provide staff training. If you look at the fiscal climate that we are in, to have OSD now have control over this instead of having the NGB have control, that, when we look at some of the training gaps, I see that as almost the same amount of money that you entered into on the spectrum contract for what the needs are on the training of the NGB level.

Can you help me understand the thinking there, because I am actually shocked to hear that our NGB would want to give, with all due respect to all of you, more control in Washington than at the State level. That is not usually what I hear from them. Can you help me understand that?

Ms. WRIGHT. Well, ma'am, I would have to go back and research it. May I take it for the record—

Senator AYOTTE. Yes, please.

Ms. WRIGHT.—because I will certainly talk to Mr. Cabrera, who is our point of contact in the Guard Bureau for the Youth Challenge Program, and I will get back to you.

[The information referred to follows:]

The amount of money (\$1 million) entered into on the Spectrum contract was provided to help us understand why a number of Youth Challenge sites were reporting sub-optimal results. While training is very important, we have found that sites fail to achieve their best results due to a plethora of reasons beyond just training, e.g., such as travel restrictions, staff turnovers, state personnel requirements, and various other issues. Additionally, there are no certified training standards adapted nationwide. We are continuing to work on developing these types of standards with the National Guard Bureau to ensure success.

We intend to continue our strong partnership of the National Guard Youth Challenge Program and further assist the National Guard Bureau in optimizing this very important program.

Senator AYOTTE. I really appreciate that, because this is a very important program. Obviously the study that was done assessing this program said for—the program earned \$2.66 in benefits from every dollar spent for the students. We are empowering the future leaders of this country with that program, so I really appreciate it very much.

I also wanted to ask about military voting. I am very concerned about what I have heard about concerns of our military getting the right and access to voting, and given the sacrifices they are making, I think we can do a lot better within DOD.

In fact, in August 2012, the DOD Inspector General basically attempted to contact the voting assistance offices, and 50 percent of the time when they tried to contact the voting assistance office, they got no answer. I cannot even imagine what sometimes our men and women in uniform go through in trying to exercise their right to vote.

I would ask you, there are other examples like the way that DOD treats a servicemember group life insurance. When someone moves from base to base or duty station to duty station, and in-processes and out-processes, you actually reconfirm their status in that sys-

tem. Is there any system in place to reconfirm with the servicemember when they are being in-processed or out-processed. You are moving? This is how you register to vote. This is your right to exercise your right to vote. What are we doing to make sure that our men and women in uniform, whatever—whoever they decide to vote, have that right?

Ms. WRIGHT. Ma'am, we know that, and I think it was August that you said that there was a problem. We really upped the game. We put a full court press in on the voting assistance office because we recognized that that was an issue throughout the military system.

We are in full compliance with the MOVE Act. We enhanced the Federal Government with voting with automated tools. I am reading here because I want to get this right. We provide guidance and support to the Military Services and the designated installation voting assistance officers. We provide guidance and training to the State and local election officials to ensure that they are aware of the laws and requirements, and we execute the enhanced voter education and outreach campaign. Yes, ma'am?

Senator AYOTTE. I do not want to interrupt because I know my time is almost up—but one thing I am trying to understand is when someone either out-processes or in-processes, is that part of their in-processing? Are they told along with an array of everything whether this is what you need to do for your life insurance, this is what you need for that, if you would like to exercise your right to vote, here is information on that. Do we do that?

Ms. WRIGHT. I would have to go back and check, but I will also tell you, ma'am, that oftentimes in the Active component military, an individual has a home of record. So the home of record could be Oregon because they entered and they live—they do not live, but they have their voting rights in Oregon. They may move all over the country, but they vote in Oregon. So that would not change based upon their Permanent Change of Station to another duty camp or station.

I can go and look to see if when we transition we ask them, but most times the Active component member continues to vote in the State of his or her home of record.

Senator AYOTTE. I understand that, and I am not asking you to inquire into whether they vote or not. Just making sure that they have the tools at their hands to understand how to exercise their right to vote.

For example, one of the big issues I heard a lot of concerns about when they were stationed overseas, whether in Afghanistan or other places overseas, a real difficulty of getting the ballots in time, all of those issues. That is another whole separate conversation we can have.

If you can at least get back to me on an answer of what—if I am now in the military and I move, or if I am stationed overseas, I am in Korea, wherever I am, what am I told, and what information am I given?

Ms. WRIGHT. How do you go about getting that?

Senator AYOTTE. I just want to make sure it is standardized in an appropriate way—

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE.—not to infringe, but to give people information.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, ma'am.

Senator AYOTTE. I appreciate it. Thank you.

[The information referred to follows:]

In compliance with Federal law, and as guided by the Department of Defense Instruction 1000.04 (issued September 13, 2012), the Military Services provide information and direct assistance on voter registration and absentee ballot procedures to uniformed servicemembers and their family members when a servicemember undergoes a permanent change of duty station; deploys overseas for at least 6 months, returns from such a deployment; and/or requests such assistance.

The Department ensures that every servicemember, especially those stationed overseas, has the information needed to exercise their right to vote. As part of the 2012 election cycle, the Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) supported the voting process by:

- Providing online tools that produced a completed Federal Post Card Application or Federal Write-in Absentee Ballot to be signed and submitted by the voter.
- Providing training to the Services and completed assistance visits to 25 percent of the established IVA Offices (43 offices).
- Conducting in-person and “train-the-trainer” workshops at 83 locations worldwide.
- Sending emails to every member of the military with a .mil email address. (More than 18 million sent.)
- Enhanced FVAP.gov to provide more direct-to-the-voter assistance, including links to local election official information and State-specific information and forms.
- Conducted comprehensive communications and outreach campaigns.
- Developing new online training modules for local election officials and Voting Assistance Officers.
- Working with State legislatures to enact reforms benefiting military and overseas voters, including the Uniform Military and Overseas Voters Act.

FVAP is working closely with the Services, State and election officials and advocacy groups to ensure voting assistance in support of the 2014 elections is even better. Although voting is an individual's choice and personal responsibility, the Department works to ensure that all members of the Uniformed Services, their families and overseas citizens are aware of their most fundamental right—and have the tools and resources to vote, if they so choose.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Madam Chairman. Good afternoon to all of you. One of the measures of whether, I guess, a budget or a policy is working with respect to personnel is just kind of the big picture. How is it going with respect to recruiting, and how is it going with respect to retention? What are strengths and successes, and what are challenges that you face right now on the recruiting and the retention side? Please, Mr. Vollrath.

Mr. VOLLRATH. Thank you. Let me take that one. First, I would make the point that currently recruiting is on track and in good shape.

Senator KAINE. Quickly, you are not having to do anything unusual or extra in order to—

Mr. VOLLRATH. That is correct.

Senator KAINE. Okay.

Mr. VOLLRATH. That is correct. But having said that, let me project out because that is really what I believe we are all about here, to manage the future and make sure we are prepared. We are very cognizant of the fact that by all means we hope that the economy in the United States continues to improve and that the unemployment rate continues to go down. That is our fondest wish along with every other citizen. But as that occurs, and we believe that

will occur, then we know by experience that we have to be attuned to the fact that recruiting is probably going to get a little more difficult as we move.

The second point I would make, as we look to the future, because we should learn from the past from the last drawdown in the mid-1990s, it is sometimes hard to explain to America that you are letting people go, but we still would like to hire somebody. So it is counterintuitive.

Those are two things that we, as we look to the future, we want to make sure that we do not become complacent and say, well, we can take more money out of recruiting, take more money out of recruiting and advertising because it might be just the wrong thing to do at the wrong time. So we are watching it like a hawk.

Retention is equally as good, and we do not see any clouds out there right now.

Senator KAINE. Have you noticed any change in the morale around recruiting and retention because of budgetary challenges, things like sequester, or just the steady drumbeat of we have to be about cutting, cutting, cutting?

Mr. VOLLRATH. Not on the military side. We have seen some concerns on the civilian recruiting side because of a 20 percent cut in pay. We have a hiring freeze. We are cognizant of that one, and it is not a major issue yet, but we are watching that, because that is probably going to occur earlier than the military issue.

Senator KAINE. Yes. On the pay side, there is an authorization to allow for an increase in salary of 1.8 percent, and the salary increase proposed in this authorization budget is 1 percent. I gather the difference there is about \$540 million first year and some escalator as it goes by. Was that decision made purely as a result of trying to deal with challenging budget realities that we would be at the 1 percent rather than at the 1.8?

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, sir, it was. That was an extremely hard decision because our men and women really do yeomen's work for us. But with the budget the way it is, we had to strike an even balance. So it will be a savings of about \$540 million this year, and so we wanted to make sure that we certainly got them a pay raise, and so it was a collective decision within the Department that 1 percent was a good balance.

Senator KAINE. Just to make sure I understand because this is my first personnel hearing dealing with salary and benefit issues, the 1.8 percent figure that was authorized was a measure of sort of what comparability of what people were getting outside the military? Is that sort of a best judgment or best—it is like a CPI index of what salary increases are in the broader—

Ms. WRIGHT. Employment Cost Index, sir.

Senator KAINE. Okay.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, sir.

Senator KAINE. Okay. I very much applaud in the submission the focus on credentialing and training, and this is an area with my first piece of legislation I am trying to deal with this. I want to do it in a way that is coordinated with you.

My experience talking to Virginians as Governor and then as a candidate was so many folks having a challenge getting traction back in a civilian workforce, and there are a variety of reasons for

that. But one of the reasons seems to be this lack of understanding among the civilian hiring officials about what it is that somebody brings to the table if they are from the military, especially enlisted.

We appreciate that you serve, but in a day of an all-volunteer military, where only 1 percent of adults serve, they do not understand what a gunnery sergeant does or what an E-5 does, and so we like you. We are glad you served. You are a patriot. But we do not know what you bring and the work that you are doing. I very much look forward to working with you on credentialing along the way so that people are getting credit for the skills they obtain at the moment they obtain them rather than trying to recreate it in the last 30 days of an active service. I applaud the work you are doing in that area.

The better it is, the better recruiting technique as well. I look forward to working with you on that.

As we are wrestling with potential force drawdowns, what is the current strategy about this scope of officer training, especially Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, and how have you factored that in going forward in terms of the numbers of people you are taking into those officer training programs? Because I hear a little bit about people getting out and getting commissioned, but then kind of being backed up going in, or being put into Reserve status for a long time, or potentially even being told, well, now we may not need you. So how are you factoring that into your planning?

Mr. VOLLRATH. Senator, right now it is, we would say, steady as she goes, okay. Navy term. I am not Navy.

Senator KAINE. Yes. Is that wise? Is it wise to be steady as you go if it looks like the overall—

Mr. VOLLRATH. We do. We know the force is drawing down, so we have turned off slightly, the ROTC program. We commission about 6,000 a year, heavily for the Active component. We have 21,000 or so in the program, most of them on scholarship or some type of help. We believe that we have the math about right based on the propensity to not overproduce, particularly given the fact that we are going to reduce the size.

We have worked with the various Services. Army, for example, they have already reduced the input, and they have planned on it for well over a year. They believe, Army in this case and all the Services because we have regular meetings about it, that they are not going to wind up with a surplus.

Your point is well taken. Again, back in the good old days where we have the tee shirt, we had too many coming through the pipe. That has already been factored in, and we think we have it about right. We have not had to turn anybody down yet.

Senator KAINE. Great.

Mr. VOLLRATH. We think we have it.

Senator KAINE. Okay, thank you Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Donnelly.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you, Madam Chairman. This would be for any of you. I wanted to talk to you about a specific situation that has arisen recently, and that is over 1,000 National Guard members from Indiana—my home State—570 of them were preparing to deploy to the Horn of Africa this month, 446 preparing

to deploy to Egypt in June, others preparing to deploy as well, were just off-ramped and notified that they were being replaced by Active component forces.

This is the only State that this happened to. Two of these units it has happened to less than 6 weeks from deployment date. Now these are people who cancelled leases, quit jobs, took extraordinary steps in their lives to prepare to get things squared away. This off-ramp has been extraordinary painful to them, to their families. I know that there was a policy put in place that was, okay, we will not do this unless somebody is at least over 120 days out. That was after this occurred because these folks were 6 weeks away.

Over 1,000 soldiers and their families will lose TRICARE in 4 days, 4 days from today. A hundred and forty-two of the soldiers that re-enlisted, re-enlisted and/or offered bonuses because they were going on a deployment. So they are being terminated. Then they are going to be asked to re-enlist, but there will be no bonus included with them as they do.

Sixty of the soldiers left their employment. Others were denied a job due to the short time between and the mobilization date where they could not get a job. Some went back and their employer had already hired and were training a replacement for them. A number had terminated housing leases.

We have no objection in Indiana to doing our share, to taking our share of the hit, but this is over and above what took place. What we are asking for is just a—it is not much. In terms of the pain and the suffering that these families are going through, it is next to nothing. But this is the Hoosier way. They said, look, we are willing to take a shot. We are willing to stand up for our country and help out and reduce costs. Can you help us with a couple of things? Number one, continue the bonus that they were promised. That is not much. It is a \$500 a month bonus. It is the total of less than \$1 million at the end of the day. Enable these soldiers to have 180 days of additional TRICARE because in 4 days, they are off of TRICARE. These are minimal things that are really, in my mind, keeping our promise.

I spoke to Secretary Hagel and one of the things he has always said, people are central to everything we do. Well, it is time for us to show that in this case. I would like a comment from any of you.

Ms. WRIGHT. Sir, I understand completely. My last job was adjutant general of Pennsylvania, so I know General Umbarger very well, and know—

Senator DONNELLY. He is not in a good mood.

Ms. WRIGHT. No. I can only imagine. I have spoken to him. I know Marty, and rightly he should not be in a good mood. This was done for financial reasons, but we need to take care of the soldiers that it was done to.

I know that the Army is working through the Guard Bureau with General Umbarger. There is a group of those soldiers that were catastrophically harmed because of this. There are some of those soldiers that may think this is okay. There are people in all categories. But our job is to take a look at all of the requests that you gave Secretary Hagel and to get back to you about where we go from here and how we can affect these soldiers' lives for the betterment.

Senator DONNELLY. I am here to try to make sure that this is made right because what was done is not.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, sir, and I know how terribly difficult it was not only on the soldier because it was very hard on the soldier, but on the family members of these soldiers.

Senator DONNELLY. Okay. We will stay in very close contact with you on that.

Ms. WRIGHT. Yes, sir. Thank you.

Senator DONNELLY. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you very much, each of you, for your service and your testimony. If any of the senators have a second round, we will permit it now. Otherwise, we will go to the next panel.

Senator Kaine?

Senator KAINE. Just one question, Mr. Wightman, on Guard and Reserve issues, really a comment more than a question. I imagine the manpower, as you are dealing with a time of tough resources, some of the manpower issues you are having to decide, the Guards, and we all relied on them so heavily as governors, they were primarily a Reserve Force. Then we built them up into essentially an operational tempo (OPTEMPO) force. As Iraq and Afghanistan are drawing down, some of the occasion for the OPTEMPO will drop.

Nevertheless, that training is such good training to have in the system right now. So as you are wrestling with manpower questions, what do you do with your Active Duty component? That has a cost. Might it be better to maintain a big chunk of your guard at an OPTEMPO type training? That may be a more cost effective way to do it.

I am curious as to how you wrestle with those kinds of manpower challenges. In particular, with respect to the Guard, is there an intention to go back to the old days, to have the Guard be a Reserve, primarily a Reserve Force, or is there, as part of the DOD strategy going forward, is the sense that we ought to keep the Guard, continue to harvest the value of that training and keep it in a component where there is an OPTEMPO capacity there that may obviate the need for some of the manpower or training over on the active side?

Mr. WIGHTMAN. Thank you for that question. It is a very difficult situation, as you said, when you have men and women who have been out there over the last 10 to 11 years and have acquired the skills and got to the level that they have, to be told that they are going to be on a shelf.

As you heard from our opening comments, our position is that the intention is not to use them simply as a strategic reserve, that we still want to keep them as a part of the operational force, and we still strive to push that as much as we can.

Now, along those lines, there are three or four studies going on within the building, and you heard Secretary Hagel the other day talk about when somebody asked him about the Active component, Reserve component mix, he said, hang on, that was just one of many factors. Then he went through general purpose, Special Operations Forces. We have to look at that mix. We have to look at the mix of conventional and unconventional, and then we also have to look at the capability of our allies. So all of this weaves in, in

addition to whether or not they are forward stationed, or rotationally deployed, or home site. So all of this is sort of under-way in the building at this time.

As you probably are also aware, there are several costing studies going on, and Chairman Arnold Punaro of the Reserve Forces Policy Board has a cost methodology study. In fact, he is briefing it to Representative Walls right now. So there is that one.

There is one that we are doing as well. Arnold is looking at the individual cost of Reserve versus Active. The Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation folks over there are looking at more of a unit in the course of a year, how much it costs to maintain a unit. Then ours is sort of a mixture, and we are looking at different alternatives to come out of that in terms of costing.

So I guess my answer to your question is, there is a lot going on. I think the sentiment from my superiors in the building is that, yes, we need to maintain the Reserve component, maybe at a lesser OPTEMPO, but certainly keep them a part of that operational force.

Senator KAINE. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, members of the panel. We appreciate your testimony very much.

We will now turn to the second panel. The second panel, we have members of The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed service and veteran organizations.

Master Chief, Retired, Joseph L. Barnes, is the National Executive Director, Fleet Reserve Association (FRA). Ms. Kathleen Moakler is the Government Relations Director, National Military Family Association. Colonel, Retired, Steven P. Strobridge is the Director of Government Relations, Military Officers Association of America (MOAA). Captain, Retired, Marshall Hanson is the Director, Legislative and Military Policy, Reserve Officer's Association (ROA).

Before you give your opening statements, I do want to recognize Mr. Barnes and Mr. Strobridge, both of whom will be retiring soon. You have both appeared before this subcommittee numerous times, and the staff informs me that this is quite likely the last time that you will come before us. I want to publicly thank you for your service in uniform and your service in support of those in uniform in your second careers.

Mr. Barnes spent over 20 years in the Navy before retiring as master chief, and then served another 20 years with the FRA. Mr. Strobridge served 24 years in the Air Force, retiring as colonel, and then spent another 19 years at the MOAA.

You have served the men and women of the armed services well in your time at FRA and MOAA. I thank you for your service and wish you well in retirement.

I now invite you to present your opening statements, but ask that you keep your oral statement to 3 to 5 minutes. Yes, Mr. Strobridge, please.

STATEMENT OF COL. STEVEN P. STROBRIDGE, USAF, RETIRED, DIRECTOR OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Madam Chairman, distinguished members of the subcommittee, we are grateful for the subcommittee's long-standing efforts to ensure fair treatment for the entire uniformed services community. We deeply appreciate this opportunity to present our views on the personnel related issues. My portion of the statement will cover health care.

The coalition disagrees strongly with the budget proposal to shift billions more cost to beneficiaries. Claims of exploding military health care costs cite growth since 2001 as if that were a reasonable starting point, but it is not. Congress enacted TRICARE For Life in 2001 to correct the ejection of older retirees from military health care in the 6 years before that. There was a spike as they returned to coverage in 2002 and 2003, but the cost growth has actually been declining ever since. It was less than 1 percent growth in 2012, and will likely decline in 2013 because of recently approved fee increases and benefit changes directed by this subcommittee and also implemented by DOD.

So the exploding cost claim is actually based on a 10-year old data point. The truth is combined personnel and health costs are the same share of the defense budget, a little less than one-third, that they have been for the last 30 plus years. In fact, DOD has used the health accounts as a cash cow to fund other needs: diverting \$700 million in surplus funds last year and \$2.5 billion over the last 3 years.

I want to make it clear that the TRICARE benefit is by and large an excellent one. We certainly recognize that. But it has to be to help induce large numbers of top quality people to accept the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in multi-decade military careers. That is why assertions that military retirees pay far less for health care than civilians do are so aggravating to the military community.

When someone gives me that argument, I ask if the military deal is so great, are you willing to pay what they did to earn it? Would you sign up to spend the next 20 years being deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, or wherever the next fight is? That is when people realize military people already pay far steeper premiums for health care than any civilian, and most of it is paid in kind, not in cash.

That is why when Congress enacted TRICARE For Life in 2001, it required no cash enrollment fee. Defense leaders say they will keep faith with the currently serving on retirement reform, and would apply any retirement changes only to new entrants. But if it is breaking faith to change the rules for someone with 10 years or even 1 year of service, it is doubly so to impose a four-figure TRICARE fee hike on those who already completed 20 or 30 years, whether they will retire next year, or whether they are already retired.

After retirees kept their part of the bargain, defense leaders, in effect, are saying their service is no longer worth so much as they were told it would be. They should pony up another \$1,000 or \$2,000 each year for the rest of their lives. They blame the budget crunch, but balk at changes to make the system more efficient.

Many studies document the inefficiencies of DOD's fragmented health systems, but DOD's recent review made minimal changes, in part because one of the key decision criteria was how hard change would be. So the first choice was to make retirees pay more because it was easier.

There is still no single point of responsibility for budgeting or delivery of DOD health care. As for the plan to means test retiree health fees, that is patent discrimination against the military. No other Federal retiree has their health benefits means tested, and it is rare in the civilian world. Under that perverse system, the longer and more successful you serve, the worse your benefits are. The coalition believes that proposed rates are significantly too high for all grades.

We have worked with this subcommittee and its House counterpart for years to put what we think are reasonable standards in law for health fees and other benefits. We now have statutory rules and guidelines, not only for the fee levels, but for future adjustments that were put into law only 5 months ago. Now DOD wants to go change those again.

We have accepted mail-order refill requirements into high pharmacy co-pays. We accept higher rates for TRICARE prime, higher co-pays for pharmacy co-pays, and statutory adjustments to future increases. This year, DOD will drop nearly 170,000 beneficiaries from TRICARE prime. All those changes will save DOD billions of dollars. Now, we think it is time to hold DOD leaders accountable for developing management efficiencies that do not impact beneficiary fees or delivery of quality care.

That concludes my statement. Thank you very much for your consideration.

[The prepared statement of The Military Coalition follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE MILITARY COALITION

Madam chair and distinguished members of the subcommittee, on behalf of The Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of nationally prominent uniformed services and veterans' organizations, we are grateful to the committee for this opportunity to express our views concerning issues affecting the uniformed services community. This statement for the record provides the collective views of the following military and veterans' organizations, which represent approximately 5.5 million current and former members of the 7 uniformed services, plus their families and survivors.

Air Force Association
 Air Force Sergeants Association
 Air Force Women Officers Associated
 AMVETS (American Veterans)
 Army Aviation Association of America
 Association of Military Surgeons of the United States
 Association of the U.S. Army
 Association of the U.S. Navy
 Chief Warrant Officer and Warrant Officer Association, U.S. Coast Guard
 Commissioned Officers Association of the U.S. Public Health Service, Inc.
 Fleet Reserve Association
 Gold Star Wives of America, Inc.
 Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America
 Jewish War Veterans of the United States of America
 Marine Corps League
 Marine Corps Reserve Association
 Military Chaplains Association of the United States of America
 Military Officers Association of America
 Military Order of the Purple Heart
 National Association for Uniformed Services

National Guard Association of the United States
 National Military Family Association
 Naval Enlisted Reserve Association
 Noncommissioned Officers Association
 Reserve Officers Association
 Society of Medical Consultants to the Armed Forces
 The Retired Enlisted Association
 U.S. Army Warrant Officers Association
 U.S. Coast Guard Chief Petty Officers Association
 Veterans of Foreign Wars
 Vietnam Veterans of America
 Wounded Warrior Project

The Military Coalition, Inc. does not receive any grants or contracts from the Federal Government.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MILITARY PERSONNEL AND HEALTHCARE COSTS IN PERSPECTIVE

For decades, critics have claimed military personnel costs are “rising out of control” and, if left unchecked, would consume future defense budgets. But those charges have proved unfounded.

- Defense spending as a percentage of GDP during wartime is much lower than during past conflicts
- Personnel and healthcare costs today are the same share of the defense budget today (less than one-third) that they’ve been for more than 30 years
- Personnel/health costs are a lower share of the budget for DOD than for many most-similar corporations (61 percent for UPS, 43 percent for FedEx, and 31+ percent for Southwest Airlines)
- At 10 percent of the defense budget, DOD healthcare costs are a bargain compared to the health cost share of the Federal budget (23 percent), the average State budget (22 percent), household discretionary spending (16 percent) and GDP (16 percent)
- Far from “exploding out of control,” Pentagon documents show military healthcare account surpluses have been raided to fund other programs (\$708 million diverted in fiscal year 2012 and total of nearly \$2.5 billion over last 3 years)
- Reprogramming document acknowledged retiree health costs went down 2.5 percent for fiscal year 2012
- DOD projections of future defense health care costs have declined steadily for the last 3 years, and will decline further based on recent law/policy changes
- Claims of “cost growth since 2001” overemphasize 10-year-old data. Growth peaked in 2002–2003 with the enactment of TRICARE For Life, and has been declining fairly steadily ever since. It was less than 1 percent for fiscal year 2012, and will decline further in the future based on administrative and statutory changes taking effect in fiscal year 2013
- Rather than seeking to raise beneficiary costs, defense leaders should be held accountable for improving efficiency and consolidating redundant, counterproductive health systems. Options to reduce costs include:
 - Establish a single authority over the three separate military systems and multiple contractors that now compete counterproductively for budget share
 - Stop ignoring multiple studies urging consolidation of healthcare budget and delivery
 - Revamp an archaic healthcare contracting system that doesn’t obtain the best value
 - Restructure accounting and record systems that cannot be validated
 - Optimize use of military treatment facilities (25 percent cheaper but 27 percent underused)
 - Eliminate pre-authorization requirement that incentivizes emergency room visits over far-less-costly urgent care clinics
 - Establish coordinated care programs for all beneficiaries with chronic conditions
- Decades of dire predictions about “unaffordable” personnel costs have proved consistently wrong
- The only times the All-Volunteer Force has been jeopardized have been due to budget-driven benefit cuts failed to offset the extraordinary demands and sacrifices of a service career

- Congress has consistently recognized the cost of sustaining the current military career incentive package is far more acceptable and affordable than the alternative
- For all of these reasons, TMC does not support the additional array of proposed TRICARE fee increases proposed in the fiscal year 2014 defense budget. In view of fee increases and statutory and policy benefit limitations already imposed in 2011 and 2012, TMC believes it is time to hold Defense officials accountable to implement efficiencies that don't affect fees or care.

CURRENTLY SERVING ISSUES

Force Levels

- Ensure adequate personnel strengths and associated funding in order to meet national security strategy requirements and dwell time needs.

Compensation

- Sustain fully-comparable annual military pay raises (1.8 percent for 2014) based on the Employment Cost Index as specified in current law.

Family Readiness and Base Support

- Ensure sustainment of Family Readiness and Support programs and base facilities
- Continue support for child care needs of the highly deployable, operational total force community
- Press the Defense Department to implement flexible spending accounts to enable military families to pay health care and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars
- Maintain much-needed supplemental funding authority for schools impacted by large populations of military students
- Encourage greater military spouse and surviving spouse educational and career opportunities, and ensure existing programs are accessible, effective, and meet the needs of all military spouses
- Direct a DOD report on Family Support and Readiness programs as well as MWR category programs to include a list of all programs, an assessment of their effectiveness, and recommended policy changes

DOD Resale Operations

- Oppose attempts to consolidate or curtail DOD resale systems in ways that would reduce their value to patrons
- Sustain necessary appropriated funds to support the commissary system and military exchanges

Military Sexual Trauma

- Sustain rigorous oversight to ensure the health, safety, readiness, and confidentiality of military personnel who have been victims of sexual assault.

HEALTHCARE ISSUES

Service vs. Beneficiary Needs

- Hold Defense leaders accountable for their own leadership, oversight, and efficiency failures instead of simply seeking to shift more costs to beneficiaries
- DOD to pursue any and all options to improve efficient and cost-effective care delivery in ways that do not disadvantage beneficiaries

Military vs. Civilian Cash Fees Is "Apple to Orange" Comparison

- Reject simple comparisons of military-to-civilian cash healthcare fees as grossly devaluing career servicemembers' and families' extraordinarily steep non-monetary contributions through decades of service and sacrifice.

DOD-VA Oversight, Accountability and Integration

- Appoint the Deputy Secretaries of DOD and VA as co-chairs of the Joint Executive Council (JEC)
- Hold joint hearings with the Veterans Affairs Committee addressing the Joint Executive Council's (JEC) effectiveness in daily oversight, management, collaboration, and coordination of the Departments' wounded warrior programs
- Continue to press for creation and implementation of a joint, bi-directional electronic medical record
- Provide permanent funding, staffing, and accountability for congressionally mandated Defense Centers of Excellence and associated mental-behavioral

health, suicide prevention, alcohol and substance abuse, caregiver, respite, and other medical and non-medical programs

- Continue aggressive oversight of the Integrated Disability Evaluation and legacy disability evaluations systems to ensure preservation of the 30-percent threshold for medical retirement, consistency and uniformity of policies, ratings, legal assistance, benefits, and transitional services Defense-wide
- Standardize terminology, definitions, eligibility criteria, roles and responsibilities around policies, programs, services, and administration of medical and non-medical support (e.g., recovering warrior categories, all categories of case managers, caregiver support and benefits, power of attorney, and a comprehensive recovery plan)
- Standardize the coordination of DOD-VA care, treatment and benefits of all Departments' case management programs, and medical and non-medical programs and services

Continuity of Health Care

- Secure the same level of payments, support and benefits for all uniformed services' wounded, ill, or injured in the line of duty
- Create a standardized curriculum and training programs for all DOD-VA mental-behavioral health providers and educational institutions in the diagnosis and treatment of PTS/PTSD/TBI
- Increase and improve the quality and timeliness of access to initial and follow-on appointments, treatment and services in DOD-VA systems, ensuring seamless transition of mental-behavioral health services are maintained for wounded, ill, and injured, their families and caregivers across the Departments
- Ensure Guard and Reserve members have adequate access and treatment in the DOD and VA health systems for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury following separation from active duty service in a theatre of operations

Mental Health Care Engagement and Destigmatization

- Continue efforts to promote engagement in and destigmatization of mental health care
- Continue to press for research on most effective treatments, coordination of programs, and measures of efficacy.

DOD-VA Integrated Disability Evaluation / Legacy Systems (IDES)

- Preserve the statutory 30 percent disability threshold for medical retirement in order to provide lifetime TRICARE coverage for those who are injured while on active duty
- Reform the DOD disability retirement system to require inclusion of all unfitting conditions and accepting the VA's "service-connected" rating
- Ensure any restructure of the DOD and VA disability and compensation systems does not inadvertently reduce compensation levels for disabled servicemembers
- Eliminate distinctions between disabilities incurred in combat vs. non-combat when determining benefits eligibility for retirement
- Tightening the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) (as recommended by the Recovering Warrior Task Force (RWTF)) to include:
 - Create a "joint" formal physical evaluation board in order to standardize disability ratings by each of the Services
 - Mandate in policy that all servicemembers entering into a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) be contacted by the MEB outreach lawyer to help navigate the board process upon notification that a narrative summary will be completed
- Pursue improvements in identifying and properly boarding (medical evaluation and physical evaluation boards) Guard and Reserve members (to include the IRR) who have been wounded or incurred injuries or illnesses while activated but have had their conditions manifest or worsen post deactivation such as establishing policies that allow for the rapid issuance of title 10 orders to affected Reserve component (as recommended by the RWTF)
- Seek legislation to eliminate legacy DES so that that servicemembers who are placed on the Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL) are afforded the opportunity to have the VA rate their disability by the IDES upon their removal from the TDRL
- Revise the VA schedule for rating disabilities (VASRD) to improve the care and treatment of those wounded, ill, and injured, especially those diagnosed with PTSD and TBI

- Bar the designation of disabling conditions as “existing prior to service” for servicemembers who have been deployed to a combat zone

Caregiver/Family Support Services

- Ensure wounded, ill, and injured families and caregivers are an integral part of the rehabilitation and recovery team and be included in and educated about medical care and treatment, disability evaluation system processes, development and implementation of the comprehensive recovery plan, and receive DOD–VA support and guidance throughout the process
- Provide enhanced training of DOD and VA medical and support staff on the vital importance of involving and informing designated caregivers in treatment of and communication with severely wounded, ill, and injured personnel
- Provide health and respite care for non-dependent caregivers (e.g., parents and siblings) who have had to sacrifice their own employment and health coverage while the injured member remains on active duty, commensurate with what the VA authorizes for eligible caregivers of medically retired or separated members
- Ensure consistency of DOD and VA caregiver benefits to ensure seamless transition from DOD to VA programs
- Extend eligibility for residence in on-base housing for up to 1 year for medically retired and severely wounded, ill, and injured members and their families, or until the servicemember receives a VA disability rating, whichever is longer

Guard and Reserve Health Care

- Authorize TRICARE for early Reserve retirees who are in receipt of retired pay prior to age 60
- Authorize premium-based TRICARE coverage for members of the Individual Ready Reserve after being called to active service for a cumulative period of at least 12 months
- Permit employers to pay TRS premiums for reservist-employees as a bottom-line incentive for hiring and retaining them
- Authorize an option for the government to subsidize continuation of a civilian employer’s family coverage during periods of activation, similar to FEHBP coverage for activated Guard-Reserve employees of Federal agencies
- Extend corrective dental care following return from a call-up to ensure G–R members meet dental readiness standards
- Allow eligibility in Continued Health Care Benefits Program for selected reservists who are voluntarily separating and subject to disenrollment from TRS
- Allow beneficiaries of the FEHBP who are Selected reservists the option of participating in TRICARE Reserve Select
- Improve the pre- and post-deployment health assessment program to address a range of mental/behavioral health issues such as substance abuse and suicide
- Allow for access to a full range of evidenced-based care and services for Reserve component members and their families, particularly during periods of re-integration back into the community

Special Needs Families

- Authorize ABA coverage as a permanent benefit under the TRICARE basic program;
- Include eligibility to other developmental disabilities that may benefit from ABA;
- Ensure permanent funding for this critical therapy; and
- Ensure any further adjustments to TRICARE eligibility apply equally to all seven uniformed services.

Additional TRICARE Prime Issues

- Authorize beneficiaries affected by Prime Service Area changes to be grandfathered in their present arrangement until they either relocate or change their current primary care provider
- Require reports from DOD and the managed care support contractors on actions being taken to ensure those affected by the Prime Service Area reductions will be able to maintain continuity of care from their existing provider or receive an adequate selection of new potential providers
- Require increased DOD efforts to ensure electronic health record consistency between MTFs and purchased care sectors and provide beneficiaries with information to assist in informed decisionmaking

Additional TRICARE Standard Issues

- Bar any further increase in the TRICARE Standard inpatient copay for the foreseeable future
- Insist on immediate delivery of an adequacy threshold for provider participation, below which additional action is required to improve such participation to meet the threshold
- Require a specific report on provider participation adequacy in the localities where Prime Service Areas will be discontinued under the new TRICARE contracts
- Increase locator support to TRICARE Standard beneficiaries seeking providers who will accept new Standard patients, particularly for primary care and mental health specialties

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE ISSUES

Operational Reserve Retention and Retirement Reform

- Eliminate the fiscal year limitation which effectively denies full early retirement credit for active duty tours that span the start of a fiscal year (October 1)
- Modernize the Reserve retirement system to incentivize continued service beyond 20 years and provide fair recognition of increased requirements for active duty service
- Authorize early retirement credit for all active duty tours of at least 90 days, retroactive to September 11, 2001

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

- Immediately implement the 2-year pilot for providing TAP services ‘outside the gate’ of active duty bases and broader expansion as soon as possible.
- Hold oversight hearings and direct additional improvements in coordination, collaboration and consistency of Yellow Ribbon services between States.

Reserve Compensation System

- Credit all inactive duty training points earned annually toward Reserve retirement
- Authorize parity in special incentive pay for career enlisted/officer special aviation incentive pay, diving special duty pay, and pro-pay for Reserve component medical professionals
- Authorize recalculation of retirement points after 1 year of activation
 - The 2010 NDAA authorized certain flag officers to recalculate retirement pay after 1 year of active duty, and we recommend this authority be extended to all ranks

Guard/Reserve GI Bill

- Work with the Veterans Affairs Committee to restore basic Reserve Montgomery GI Bill benefits for initially joining the Selected Reserve to the historic benchmark of 47–50 percent of the active duty MGIB
- Integrate Reserve MGIB benefits currently in title 10 with active duty veteran educational benefit programs under title 38
- Enact academic protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students, including refund guarantees

Guard/Reserve Family Support Programs

- Review the adequacy of programs to meet the special information and support needs of families of individual Reserve augmentees or those who are geographically dispersed
- Foster programs among military and community leaders to support servicemembers and families during all phases of deployments
- Provide preventive counseling services for servicemembers and families
- Authorize child care for family readiness group meetings and drill time and respite care during deployments
- Improve the joint family readiness program to facilitate understanding and sharing of information between all family members

RETIREE ISSUES

Military Retirement Reform

- Oppose any initiative that would “civilianize” the military retirement system, ignore the lessons of the ill-fated REDUX initiative, and inadequately recognize

the unique and extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a military career.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs)

- Reject the chained CPI as a basis for adjusting military retired pay
- Ensure the continued fulfillment of congressional COLA intent, as expressed in House National Security Committee Print of title 37, U.S.C.: “to provide every military retired member the same purchasing power of the retired pay to which he was entitled at the time of retirement [and ensure it is] not, at any time in the future . . . eroded by subsequent increases in consumer prices”
- Ensure equal treatment of all uniformed service personnel, to include NOAA/USPHS/USCG personnel, with respect to any retirement/COLA legislation

Concurrent Receipt

- Continue seeking to expand Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) to disabled retirees not eligible under the current statute, with first priority for vesting of earned retirement credit for Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service.

Fair Treatment for Servicemembers Affected by Force Reductions

- Enact temporary legislation that would allow members separated during periods of significant force reductions to deposit part or all of their involuntary separation pay or voluntary separation pay into their TSP account.

SURVIVOR ISSUES

SBP-DIC Offset

- Continue pursuing ways to repeal the SBP-DIC offset
- Authorize SBP annuities to be placed into a Special Needs Trust for permanently disabled survivors who otherwise lose eligibility for State programs because of means testing
- Reduce the age for paid-up SBP to age 67 for those who joined the military at age 17, 18, or 19
- Reinstate SBP annuities to survivors who transfer benefits to their children when the children reach majority, or when a subsequent remarriage ends in death or divorce

Final Retired Paycheck

- Authorize survivors of retired members to retain the final month’s retired pay for the month in which the retiree dies.

INTRODUCTION

Mr. Chairman, The Military Coalition thanks you and the entire subcommittee for your exceptionally strong support of our Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, retired members, and veterans of the uniformed services, their families and survivors. Your efforts have had an enormously positive impact in the lives of the entire uniformed services community.

We specifically wish to thank the committee for its good actions in adopting the 2012 NDAA provisions recognizing that healthcare is an earned benefit for service rendered during a lengthy career and in securing more reasonable TRICARE pharmacy co-pay adjustments.

We are truly grateful for your unwavering commitment to men and women who defend our fine nation.

We appreciate that personnel issues have been a top priority for Congress in the past few years. There have been difficult choices associated with bolstering a weak economy and addressing record-breaking budget deficits. The past few years have been exceptionally arduous, with our military winding down operations in Afghanistan.

Despite extraordinary demands, men and women in uniform are still answering the call—thanks in no small measure to the subcommittee’s strong and consistent support—but only at the cost of ever-greater personal sacrifices. We have seen dramatic increases in suicide rates which reflect the continued stress placed on servicemembers and their families. In addition, there are reports that the military divorce rates are at the highest level since 1999.

MILITARY PERSONNEL AND HEALTHCARE COST OVERVIEW

For decades, critics have claimed military personnel costs are “rising out of control” and, if left unchecked, would “consume future defense budgets.” They’ve at-

tacked pay, retirement, health care, and other military benefits in hopes of diverting funds to hardware or non-defense programs.

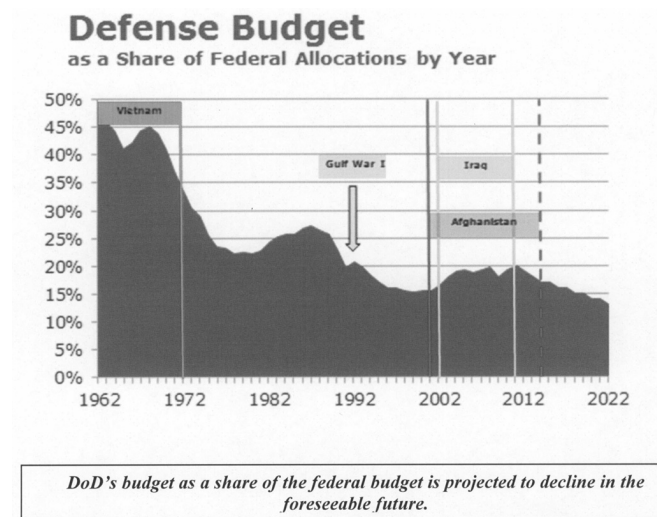
But hard experience proved such claims wrong in the past—and they're still wrong today.

Check the Record, Not Misleading Projections

Over the past 50 years, the defense budget has consumed a progressively smaller share of Federal outlays.

In 1962, defense consumed nearly 47 percent of Federal outlays; today it's at its smallest share in 50 years and will drop further—below 12.5 percent—by 2017.

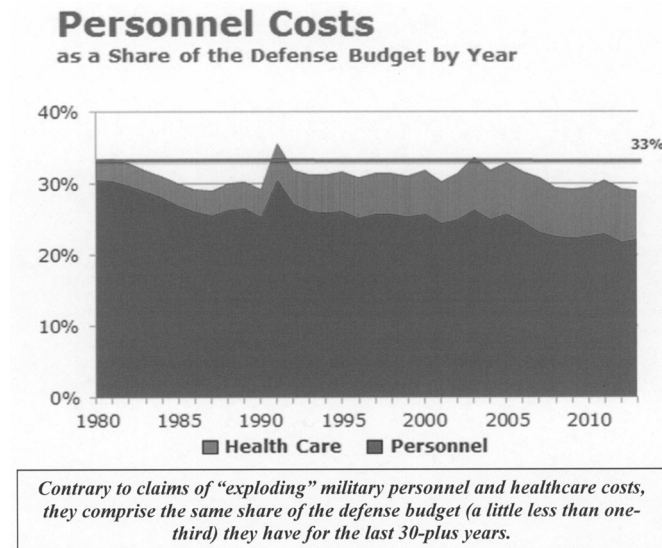
Today's wartime share of GDP is lower than for any past conflict, as shown in the following chart.



Some argue that's all the more reason to worry about the rising cost of military people programs.

Last year, Defense and service leaders decried military personnel and health costs as consuming about roughly one-third of the defense budget—implying this represents a dramatic increase.

The truth is the same one-third of the defense budget has gone to personnel and health care costs for the last 30 years. These programs are no more unaffordable now than in the past.



Who Says One-Third Is Too Much?

Is it good or bad if these costs are one-third of a big organization’s annual budget? There’s no civilian counterpart to the military, but let’s consider corporations with big air fleets. Personnel costs comprise:

- 61 percent of United Parcel Service’s budget.
- 43 percent of FedEx’s budget.
- 31 percent of operating revenue (which includes profit, so the percentage of expenditures is higher) for Southwest Airlines—recognized as among the most cost-efficient air carriers.

Military Health Costs Are NOT “Eating DOD Alive”

Defense leaders complain these costs approach 10 percent of the (non-war) defense budget.

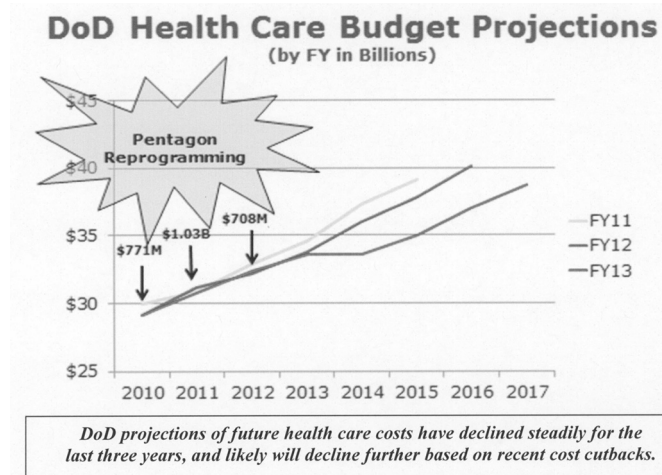
But health costs comprise:

- 23 percent of the Federal budget
- 22 percent of the average State budget
- 16 percent of household discretionary spending
- 16 percent of U.S. Gross Domestic Product

Put in proper context, DOD’s 10 percent is a bargain.

In fact, Pentagon documents show DOD has used the military healthcare account as a “cash cow” to fund other programs.

- Diverted \$708 million surplus in fiscal year 2012
- Diverted total of nearly \$2.5 billion over fiscal year 2010–2012
- Fiscal year 2012 reprogramming request acknowledged retiree health costs went down 2.5 percent
- Budget projections have reduced outyear cost estimates 3 years in a row
- Changes included in National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 will reduce them even further



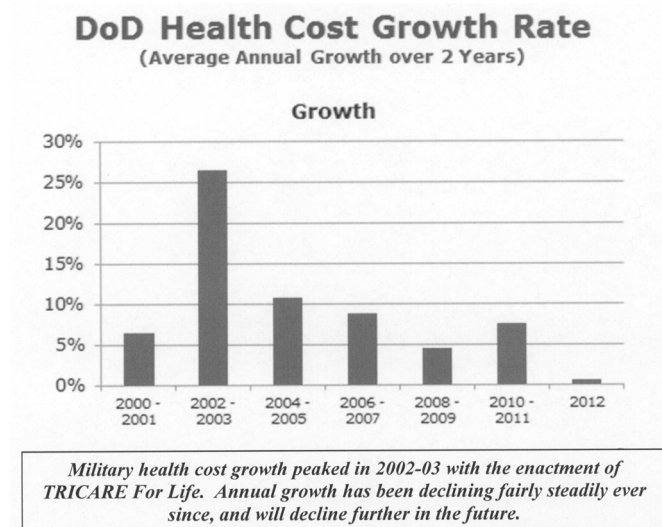
“Cost Growth Since 2000/2001” Is a Red Herring

Citing such statistics implies personnel/health costs in 2001 represented a reasonable standard. Nothing could be farther from the truth.

In fact, cutbacks in pay, healthcare, and retirement throughout the 1980s and 1990s caused retention problems in the late 1990s that Congress has worked hard to fix over the last decade.

Charting growth from a starting point in 2000 or 2001 inappropriately inflates apparent trends by including one-time changes made early last decade that won't be repeated in the future.

The chart below illustrates how citing health cost growth since 2001 is misleading. The reality is that cost trends have moderated significantly in more recent years, and that is far more important for projecting future trends than what happened more than a decade ago.



The rate of health cost change will only decline further in the outyears, due to:

- Significant pharmacy copay increases starting this year
- Significant savings from requiring mandatory mail-order/military pharmacy refills of maintenance medications for Medicare-eligible beneficiaries starting this year
- Savings associated with shrinking TRICARE Prime service areas.

The bottom line: the “military health cost growth since 2001” argument is based on 10-year old data that’s irrelevant to the future.

The Real Health Cost Issue: Inefficiency, Oversight Failures

Rather than seeking to blame beneficiaries (and raise beneficiaries’ costs), defense leaders should focus on fulfilling their responsibilities to provide efficient oversight of DOD health programs.

They should be held accountable for correcting real sources of excess costs – fixing known problems and consolidating redundant, counterproductive health systems.

Options to reduce excess costs include:

- Establish a single authority over the three separate military systems and multiple contractors that now compete counterproductively for budget share
- Stop ignoring the plethora of studies since 1947 which have consistently recommended the consolidation of medical budget oversight and execution
- Revamp an archaic healthcare contracting system which doesn’t obtain the best value
- Restructure accounting and record systems that cannot be validated
- Optimize the use of military treatment facilities, which are 25 percent less costly but 27 percent underutilized
- Eliminate pre-authorization requirement that incentivizes emergency room visits over far-less-costly urgent care clinics
- Establish coordinated care programs for all beneficiaries with chronic conditions

It’s important to recognize that the military’s healthcare system is built for readiness and service convenience, not for the beneficiary’s needs.

When the Services deploy or cut medical professionals, beneficiaries are forced into costly civilian care. Attempting to shift the costs of readiness or inefficiencies onto the beneficiaries is just simply wrong.

For all of these reasons, TMC does not support the additional array of proposed TRICARE fee increases proposed in the fiscal year 2014 defense budget. In view of fee increases and statutory and policy benefit limitations already imposed in 2011 and 2012, TMC believes it is time to hold Defense officials accountable to implement efficiencies that don’t affect fees or delivery of quality care.

Military Retirement: Neither Unfair nor Unaffordable

Whenever military budgets get tight, analysts, task forces and commissions come forth proposing military retirement cutbacks. Past defense leaders asserted such efforts were detrimental to retention and readiness. In contrast, today’s senior defense leaders have voiced support for significant changes.

Former Secretary of Defense Gates criticized the 20-year retirement system as “unfair” to those who leave service before that point, citing the vesting options provided to civilian workers. He directed the Defense Business Board (DBB) to identify alternative options.

In his final appearance before the Senate, Gates endorsed an early vesting program, noting, “70 to 80 percent of the force does not stay until retirement but leaves with nothing.”

Yet there is no support for spending more money on military retirement during budget-cutting times. So vesting options proposed to date, including those of the DBB and the 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC)—would fund that new benefit by imposing dramatic benefit cuts for the 17 percent who complete full careers in uniform.

There are good reasons only 17 percent of service entrants are willing to pursue a military career. The vast majority of Americans are unwilling to accept those conditions for even one tour of duty, let alone 20 or 30 years.

Both the DBB and QRMC proposals ignore the hard lessons of previous experiences with retirement cuts.

Budget pressures prompted Congress in 1986 to pass changes reducing the 20-year retired pay value by 25 percent for post-1986 entrants.

At the time, Defense Secretary Caspar Weinberger adamantly opposed the so-called “REDUX” change, warning Congress it inevitably would undermine retention and readiness. That prediction proved true a decade later, and Congress repealed REDUX in 1999.

Stunningly, the cuts to career military retirement benefits proposed by both the DBB and QRMC are vastly more severe than the retention-killing REDUX cuts.

The powerful pull of the 20-year retirement system is the main reason retention hasn't imploded over the past decade-plus of unprecedented wartime strains on troops and families.

If one tried to build a plan to slash career retention, it's hard to conceive a better way than the DBB or QRMC proposals.

Advocates for these draconian initiatives sugarcoat them by saying they wouldn't affect anyone currently serving and would apply only to new entrants. But that was true of the REDUX system, and we know how that turned out.

The "Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission" mandated by the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 includes a "grandfather" clause to exempt currently serving personnel from recommended reforms.

But grandfathering the current force only lets leaders evade responsibility for their ill-conceived actions by deferring the inevitable retention disaster for a decade and dumping the mess on their successors.

Military retirement critics have claimed for decades the current unique plan is unaffordable and unsustainable.

Almost 35 years ago, the 1978 report of the President's Commission on Military Compensation included this extract from the minority report of Commissioner Lt. Gen. Benjamin O. Davis Jr., USAF (Ret.):

"Unfortunately, the commission has embraced the myth that retirement costs will soon rise so high—from \$10 billion this year to \$30 billion in the year 2000—as to become an unacceptable and unfair burden on the American taxpayer.

"Such assertions fail to point out that by using the same assumptions, today's average family income of \$10,000 will be \$36,000 in the year 2000. The average cost of a home will be \$171,000; a compact automobile will cost \$17,000; and the overall U.S. budget will have increased from \$500 billion to some amount in the trillions."

Such numbers seem quaint today, but they make two telling points.

First, long-term projections that now appear dire often prove far less so as years pass.

Second, after budget-driven retirement cuts in 1986 undermined retention, Congress found restoring the current system more affordable than continued retention and readiness shortfalls.

DBB leaders acknowledged they didn't consider the potential retention effects of their plan.

During 2012 testimony before Congress, defense witnesses acknowledged the DBB proposal would hurt retention—and went a step further.

Dr. Jo Ann Rooney, principal deputy undersecretary for Personnel and Readiness, testified the current military retirement system is "neither unaffordable, nor spiraling out of control," noting retirement costs as a percentage of pay have remained reasonably constant.

Why the Military Requires Unique Incentives for Career Service

A military career entails unique and arduous service conditions few other Americans are willing to endure for 20 to 30 years, including:

- Hazardous duty
- Service in foreign, often hostile environments
- Frequent/extended forced family separations
- Long duty hours without extra pay
- Frequent forced relocations
- Disruption of spousal career/earnings
- Disruption of children's schooling
- Inadequate expense reimbursement
- "Up or out" promotion system
- Forced mid-life career change
- Forfeiture of personal freedoms other Americans take for granted

Keeping Faith with the All-Volunteer Force

No Federal obligation is more important than protecting national security. The most important element of national security is sustainment of a dedicated, top-quality career military force, but only a fraction of 1 percent of our population is willing to endure a single term of service, let alone a full career.

The past decade of unprecedented demands and sacrifices highlight how radically different military service conditions are from civilian life.

Yet budget critics persist in asserting military pay, retirement, and health care benefits are unsustainable and should be slashed to resemble civilian benefit packages.

Decades of dire predictions about “unaffordable” personnel costs have proved consistently wrong.

Existing career incentives have sustained a strong national defense through more severe and protracted wartime conditions than even the strongest volunteer-force proponents thought it could survive.

The only times the All-Volunteer Force has been jeopardized have been due to budget-driven cutbacks in the military compensation package that gave insufficient weight to the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a service career.

Congress has consistently recognized the cost of sustaining the current military career incentive package is far more acceptable and affordable than the alternative.

America will remain the world’s greatest power only as long as it continues to fulfill its reciprocal obligation to the only weapon system that has never let our country down—our extraordinarily dedicated, top-quality, all-volunteer career force.

The coalition offers the following recommendations on what must be done to meet this essential obligation.

CURRENTLY SERVING ISSUES

Force Levels

We are thankful Congress revised the permanent active duty end strength minimum levels in the 2013 NDAA and placed an annual limitation on end strength reductions for both the Army and Marines.

We certainly understand why DOD is reducing force levels by 110,000 as operations wind down in Afghanistan and that the ongoing fiscal crisis requires significant budget reductions. However, the coalition believes continued care must be taken to ensure force reductions do not create additional burdens on our service-members and their families.

For the last decade, servicemembers and their families have endured unprecedented sacrifices often having less than a year at home before returning for another year in combat. Both Defense and Service leaders have acknowledged that minimum dwell time should be at least 2 years at home after a year deployment. Stress indicators are alarming as we see increases in divorces, suicide rates, and other symptoms. Moreover the minimum dwell time goal has yet to be attained for all deploying servicemembers.

Concurrently, we believe that the Nation needs to sustain a surge capacity for unexpected contingencies and retaining combat experience by encouraging departing veterans to join the Guard and Reserve. On September 10, 2001 no one in Washington anticipated the following decade would find us engaged in two major and protracted wars.

Cutting Guard/Reserve Forces as well as Active Forces will make achieving these goals even more difficult.

Additionally, providing a competitive compensation and benefits package is essential for recruiting and maintaining a quality All-Volunteer Force. Funding needed military schools and indexed housing allowances and support services are powerful incentives for retaining skilled and experienced personnel, a concern we all share in dealing with an extended national crisis.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to ensure adequate personnel strengths and associated funding in order to meet national security strategy requirements and dwell time needs.

Compensation

The coalition was pleased that Congress approved an active duty 1.7 percent pay raise in the 2013 NDAA which reflected the growth in private sector pay, as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Cost Index (ECI). Congress has made great strides to restore military pay comparability over the past 13 years, including a statutory change that explicitly ties military pay raises to ECI growth.

However, the coalition is very concerned that many in the administration and some Members of Congress are unaware of the history of compensation including changes and associated unforeseen outcomes. Moreover we are alarmed that some view these vital compensation programs as a source of savings without regard to the impact they may have on long term readiness in the All-Volunteer Force.

The coalition is particularly concerned about the administration’s proposal to cap the 2014 military pay raise at 1 percent, rather than matching the ECI-based average American’s 1.8 percent raise, as required by current law.

History provides ample evidence that capping military raises is an exceptionally slippery slope which has never ended well.

In the 1970s, a succession of annual pay raise caps contributed to serious retention problems which were fixed approving two large “catch-up” raises in 1981 and 1982. But that lesson was quickly forgotten.

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, budget problems led to regular capping of military pay raises below private sector pay growth, eventually accumulating a “pay comparability gap” which peaked at 13.5 percent in 1998–1999, and again contributed significantly to serious retention problems.

Now that erosion of pay and associated retention-related problems have abated, there are renewed calls to cut back on military raises, create either a new comparability standard, or substitute more bonuses for pay raises in the interests of deficit reduction.

The coalition believes such proposals are exceptionally short-sighted in light of the extensive negative past experience with military pay raise caps.

History shows that, once military pay raise caps are implemented, the tendency has been to continue them until retention problems arise which then have to be addressed through significant pay raise plus-ups.

The purpose of sustaining pay comparability through both good times and bad is to prevent retention and readiness problems from occurring. This avoids going through endless cycles of causing problems and then repairing them.

Additionally, the Pentagon has been advocating for a new comparability standard under which each pay and longevity cell would represent the 70th percentile of compensation for similarly-educated civilians.

A 2010 Congressional Budget Office (CBO) report asserted that, considering adjustments in housing allowances, many military people actually are paid somewhat more than their civilian counterparts in terms of Regular Military Compensation (RMC), composed of basic pay, food and housing allowances, and the tax advantage that accrues because the allowances are tax-free.

The coalition believes the CBO assertions are fundamentally flawed for three distinct reasons.

First, the RMC concept was developed in the 1960s, when all servicemembers received the same allowances, regardless of location, and the allowances were arbitrarily established. Congress has since transformed the allowances into reimbursements for actual food costs and for median locality-based housing costs. Under the RMC comparability concept, a year in which taxes increase and average housing allowances rise (e.g., based on growth in high-cost areas) could perversely require a cut in basic pay to restore comparability.

The coalition believes it would be difficult for Congress to explain to troops why their pay raises should be reduced because their taxes are rising.

Second, the coalition is not convinced that the civilian comparison cohort or percentile comparison points as proposed by DOD are appropriate since the military:

- Recruits from the top half of the civilian aptitude population;
- Finds that only about 25 percent of America’s youth qualify for entry;
- Requires career-long education and training advancement; and
- Enforces a competitive “up-or-out” promotion system to ensure progressive quality enhancements among those with longer service.

Third, it is essential to recognize that compensation is not simply the amount one is paid. It is pay divided by what’s required of the recipient to earn that pay. If pay increases 25 percent but 100 percent more sacrifice is required to earn it, that’s not a pay raise.

In that context, today’s conditions of service are far more arduous than anything envisioned 40 years ago when the All-Volunteer Force was created. Those creators believed a protracted war would require reinstitution of the draft.

Moreover, a fundamental requirement for any pay comparability standard is that it should be transparent and understandable by all. The coalition has sought, but has never been provided by DOD, any data on what civilian comparison cohort was selected and why, and what rationale was used to establish a specific percentile comparison point.

The coalition agrees with the approach Congress has consistently taken—that the best comparability measure is a comparison of the military basic pay raise percentage with the percentage growth private sector pay, as measured by the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Cost Index (ECI). The government uses the ECI for every other measure of private pay growth, and it’s transparent to government leaders and servicemembers alike.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to sustain fully-comparable annual military pay raises (1.8 percent for 2014) based on the ECI as specified in current law.

Family Readiness and Base Support

A fully funded, robust family readiness program continues to be crucial to overall readiness of our military, especially with the demands of frequent and extended deployments.

Resource shortfalls continue to plague basic installation support programs. At a time when families are dealing with continuing deployments, they often are being asked to do without in other important areas.

Yet the Defense Department has acknowledged that sequestration has placed family support programs at even greater risk.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to continue to press the Defense Department to exercise its authority to establish flexible spending accounts (FSAs) for servicemembers so they can participate in the same pre-tax program available to all other Federal employees for their out-of-pocket health and dependent care expenses.

The coalition was especially pleased that the subcommittee secured a plus-up in Impact Aid in the 2013 NDAA. Providing appropriate and timely funding of Impact Aid is critical to ensuring quality education for military children regardless of where they live.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Ensure sustainment of Family Readiness and Support programs and base facilities
- Continue support for child care needs of the highly deployable, operational total force community
- Continue pressing the Defense Department to implement flexible spending accounts to enable military families to pay health care and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars
- Continue much-needed supplemental funding authority to schools impacted by large populations of military students
- Encourage greater military spouse and surviving spouse educational and career opportunities, and ensure existing programs are accessible, effective, and meeting the needs of all military spouses
- Direct a DOD report on Family Support and Readiness programs as well as MWR category programs to include a list of all programs, an assessment of their effectiveness, and recommended policy changes

DOD Resale Operations

The Military Coalition strongly believes military commissary, exchange and Morale Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs contribute significantly to a strong national defense by sustaining morale and quality of life for military beneficiaries both within the United States and around the globe.

The coalition is very concerned about initiatives to curtail appropriated fund support for these activities.

The resale system has proven its efficiency, as the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) alone has reduced its annual operating costs by more than \$700 million per year.

Repeated studies have shown that military commissaries provide \$2 in compensation value to beneficiaries for each \$1 of appropriated funding. That constitutes a very significant retention “bang for the buck.”

Initiatives to civilianize commissaries or consolidate commissaries and exchanges to achieve budget savings would come only at the expense of devaluing their compensation and retention importance value for military patrons.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Oppose attempts to consolidate or curtail DOD resale systems in ways that would reduce their value to patrons
- Sustain necessary appropriated funds to support the Commissary and Exchange

Military Sexual Trauma

With an estimated 19,000 yearly sexual assaults within the military, low rates of report and prosecution, and the negative impact of delayed treatment seeking for victims of MST, this is a pressing issue. The coalition is grateful for the subcommittee’s positive action on these issues.

Preventing sexual assaults demands the most forceful of efforts. DOD has attempted to institute prevention strategies and improve response mechanisms, and has reported on its progress. However, as Congress recognized in imposing wide-ranging new measures through the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, DOD has not gone far enough. Ultimately, resolving this issue requires a culture change and forceful leadership, and ongoing congressional oversight to sustain that effort. Instituting

policies that encourage and support victims through the reporting process would be a first step in combating a culture of complacency. Revising the military justice system to hold perpetrators accountable would be another.

Additionally, with few victims of MST reporting their assault, screening and treatment are needed areas of improvement. A January 2013 GAO report on DOD health care for servicewomen found health care for victims of MST can vary by service, providers often aren't aware of health care services available or what they have a responsibility to provide, and DOD has no established guidance for treatment of injuries stemming from MST. At a recent Senate Armed Services Committee hearing, officials from DOD stated they are working on providing that guidance.

The coalition urges Congress to sustain rigorous oversight to ensure the health, safety, readiness and confidentiality of military personnel who have been victims of sexual assault.

HEALTH CARE ISSUES

Service vs. Beneficiary Needs

Unlike civilian healthcare systems, the military health system is built mainly to meet military readiness requirements rather than to deliver needed care efficiently to beneficiaries.

Each Service maintains its unique facilities and systems to meet its unique needs, and its primary mission is to sustain readiness by keeping a healthy force and sustaining capacity to treat casualties from military actions. That model is built neither for cost efficiency nor beneficiary welfare.

When military forces deploy, the military medical force goes with them, and that forces families, retirees and survivors to use the more expensive civilian health care system in the absence of so many uniformed health care providers. This shift in the venue of care and the associated costs are completely out of beneficiary control.

These military-unique requirements have significantly increased readiness costs. But those added costs were incurred for the convenience of the military, not for any beneficiary consideration, and beneficiaries should not be expected to bear any share of military-driven costs—particularly in wartime.

The coalition strongly rejects Defense leaders' efforts to seek dramatic beneficiary cost increases as a first cost-containment option rather than meeting their own responsibilities to manage military healthcare programs in a more cost-effective manner.

Instead of imposing higher fees on beneficiaries as the first budget option, DOD leaders should be held accountable for the REAL source of excess costs: failing to fix/consolidate redundant, counterproductive DOD health systems. These failures have added billions to defense health costs. Specifically:

- Decades of GAO and other reports demonstrate DOD cost accounting systems lack transparency and are unauditible
- No single authority over three separate service health systems and multiple contractors that compete for budget share in self-defeating ways
- DOD and service leaders ignore 19 studies by GAO, IG, and others since 1947, all showing consolidation of policies, medical budget oversight and execution would save billions
- A last-century contract system undermines capacity for best practices
- Military treatment facilities are 25 percent less costly—but 27 percent underutilized
- DOD-sponsored reviews indicate more efficient organization could cut health costs 30 percent without affecting care or beneficiary costs
- Incentives to providers are not sufficiently based on quality-driven clinical outcomes that reward efficiency and value
- Referral requirements that add complexity and actually inhibit timely delivery of needed and cost-effective care should be eliminated (e.g., referral is not required for emergency room visits, but is required for acute care facilities, leading many TRICARE Prime beneficiaries to routinely visit far-more-expensive emergency rooms on weekends and evenings)
- Current inflexible appointment systems inhibit beneficiary access to care

These are only some of the examples demonstrating that effective leadership, oversight, and reorganization of military healthcare delivery could dramatically reduce defense health costs without affecting care or costs for beneficiaries.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to hold Defense leaders accountable for their own leadership, oversight, and efficiency failures instead of simply seeking to shift more costs to beneficiaries. Congress should direct DOD to pursue any and all options to improve efficient and cost-effective care delivery in ways that do not disadvantage beneficiaries.

Military vs. Civilian Cash Fees Is “Apple to Orange” Comparison

The coalition continues to object strongly to simple comparisons of military vs. civilian cash fees. Such “apple to orange” comparisons ignore most of the very great price career military members and families pay for their coverage in retirement.

The unique package of military retirement benefits—of which a key component is a superior health care benefit—is the primary offset provided uniformed servicemembers for enduring a career of unique and extraordinary sacrifices that few Americans are willing to accept for 1 year, let alone 20 or 30. It is an unusual and essential compensation package a grateful Nation provides to the small fraction of the population who agree to subordinate their personal and family lives to protecting our national interests for so many years.

For all practical purposes, those who wear the uniform of their country are enrolled in a 20- to 30-year prepayment plan that must be completed to earn lifetime health coverage. Once that prepayment is already rendered, the government cannot simply ignore it and focus only on post-service cash payments—as if the past service, sacrifice, and commitments had no value.

DOD and the Nation—as good-faith employers of the trusting members from whom they demand such extraordinary commitment and sacrifice—have a reciprocal health care obligation to retired servicemembers and their families and survivors that far exceeds any civilian employers.

Until a few years ago, this was not a particular matter of concern, as no Secretary had previously proposed dramatic fee increases.

The experience of the recent past—during which several Secretaries proposed no increases and then a new Secretary proposed doubling, tripling, and quadrupling various fees—has convinced the coalition that current law leaves military beneficiaries excessively vulnerable to the varying budgetary inclinations of the incumbent Secretary of Defense.

It’s true that many private sector employers are choosing to shift more healthcare costs to their employees and retirees, and that’s causing many still-working military retirees to fall back on their service-earned TRICARE coverage. Fallout from the recession has reinforced this trend.

Efforts to paint this in a negative light (i.e., implying that working-age military retirees with access to civilian employer plans should be expected to use those instead of military coverage) belie both the service-earned nature of the military coverage and the longstanding healthcare promises the government aggressively employed to induce their career service.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to continue to reject simple comparisons of military-to-civilian cash healthcare fees as grossly devaluing career servicemembers’ and families’ extraordinarily steep nonmonetary contributions through decades of service and sacrifice.

WOUNDED, ILL, AND INJURED SERVICEMEMBER CARE

TMC believes strongly that Active DOD and VA collaboration is not only essential to achieving seamless transition, such cooperation is also critical to the long-term sustainability of our defense strategy, the health and wellness of the All-Volunteer Force and the acknowledgement of our country’s commitment and moral obligation to the long-term care and support for those who served.

As the military begins implementing its exit strategy in Afghanistan, the coalition worries about the stability and viability of the policies, programs, and services over the long haul intended to care and support our wounded, ill, and injured and their families-caregivers.

Thanks to the subcommittee’s efforts, policy, program and service enhancements have greatly enhanced system capacities and capabilities. Since 2007, every National Defense Authorization Act has built upon institutionalizing a seamless, unified and synchronized health systems-approach for caring and supporting our wounded heroes and their families.

The coalition commends DOD and VA for the milestones they have achieved to make these systems better over the last decade. We believe greater progress can be made if the Departments more aggressively pursue collaborative partnerships with other government agencies and non-government entities to drive down costs, support seamless transition efforts, and improve continuity of medical care. Both agencies have stated repeatedly that ‘they can’t meet the needs of our recovering warriors without the help of outside organizations’—yet, DOD and VA continue to remain isolated and closed systems, not drawing on or leveraging the very public-private partnerships they say they want and need.

The challenges are many, and the policy and program issues remain extremely complex and seemingly difficult to overcome. However, TMC believes collaborative

efforts of the administration, Congress, the Pentagon and Military Services, and VA working together with military and veteran organizations and beneficiaries can remove these barriers and simplify the systems.

DOD-VA Oversight, Accountability, and Integration

Since the Pentagon and VA have relegated responsibility and authority to lower levels of the agencies, TMC has seen an expansion of uncertainty and confusion as to what the hundreds of wounded, ill, and injured programs are doing, what the span of control is over these programs, or what the return on investment, efficacy, or effectiveness of these program in meeting the needs of a growing population of military, veterans and families that are and will be accessing these systems of care.

The limited authority of the Joint Executive Committee (JEC) and visibility of these important issues are making it difficult for senior official involvement and oversight on these matters and limiting the Department's ability to fully establish a synchronized, uniform and seamless approach to care and services. Additionally, significant changes in the DOD civilian and military leadership and threats of significant budget cuts make caring for our wounded warriors more critical than ever before.

While many well-meaning and hard-working military personnel and civilians are doing their best to keep pushing progress forward, leadership, organization, and mission changes have left many leaders frustrated with the process, insufficient resources, and struggling to effect needed changes.

The coalition urges joint hearings by the Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees to assess the effectiveness of current seamless transition oversight efforts and systems and to solicit views and recommendations from DOD, VA, the military services, and nongovernmental organizations concerning how joint communication, cooperation, and oversight could be improved.

The recent announcement that DOD and VA are backtracking on development and implementation of a joint DOD-VA electronic medical record is particularly discouraging, given the broad consensus on how essential this joint record is to long-term success of seamless transition efforts.

The coalition specifically recommends Congress:

- Appoint the Deputy Secretaries of DOD and VA as co-chairs of the Joint Executive Council (JEC)
- Hold joint hearings with the Veterans Affairs Committee addressing the Joint Executive Council's (JEC) effectiveness in daily oversight, management, collaboration, and coordination of the Departments' wounded warrior programs
- Continue to press for creation and implementation of a joint, bidirectional electronic medical record
- Provide permanent funding, staffing, and accountability for congressionally mandated Defense Centers of Excellence and associated mental-behavioral health, suicide prevention, alcohol and substance abuse, caregiver, respite, and other medical and non-medical programs
- Continue aggressive oversight of the Integrated Disability Evaluation and legacy disability evaluations systems to ensure preservation of the 30-percent threshold for medical retirement, consistency and uniformity of policies, ratings, legal assistance, benefits, and transitional services Defense-wide
- Standardize terminology, definitions, eligibility criteria, roles and responsibilities around policies, programs, services, and administration of medical and non-medical support (e.g., recovering warrior categories, all categories of case managers, caregiver support and benefits, power of attorney, and a comprehensive recovery plan)
- Standardize the coordination of DOD-VA care, treatment and benefits of all Departments' case management programs, and medical and non-medical programs and services

Continuity of Health Care

Transitioning between DOD and VA health care systems remains a significant and one of the most challenging aspects of the care process for wounded warriors and their families. The medical systems continue to be overwhelming and confusing to those trying to navigate them, especially during times when individuals are experiencing a great deal of trauma and uncertainty about what the future holds at the same time coping with the realities of their wounds and disabilities. Wounded warriors and their families continue to be less satisfied with their transition after separation or medical retirement and into longer-term care and support in either the military or VA medical systems.

Additionally, systemic, cultural, and bureaucratic obstacles often prevent the servicemember or veteran from receiving the continuity of care they need to heal

and have productive and a high level of quality of life they so desperately need and desire. We hear regularly from members who have experienced significant disruptions of care upon leaving service, and frustration that many of the essential rehabilitation services that were available on active duty are no longer available to them in the military health system and/or VA, such as behavioral health, cognitive rehabilitation services.

The coalition urges Congress to:

- Secure the same level of payments, support and benefits for all uniformed services' wounded, ill, or injured (WII) in the line of duty
- Create a standardized curriculum and training programs for all DOD-VA mental-behavioral health providers and educational institutions in the diagnosis and treatment of PTS/PTSD/TBI
- Increase and improve the quality and timeliness of access to initial and follow-on appointments, treatment, and services in DOD-VA systems, ensuring seamless transition of mental-behavioral health services are maintained for wounded, ill, and injured, their families and caregivers across the Departments
- Ensure Guard and Reserve members have adequate access and treatment in the DOD and VA health systems for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Traumatic Brain Injury following separation from active duty service in a theatre of operations

Mental Health Care Engagement and Destigmatization

The rising suicide rate within the military suggests that a majority of servicemembers are not seeking the help they need. Stigma and organizational barriers to care are part of the reason why only a small proportion of soldiers with psychological problems seek professional help. Another deterrent is servicemembers' negative perceptions about the utility of mental health care. To reach these warriors, greater engagement is key.

Family support, peer outreach, and community partnerships have been explored as methods to better engage servicemembers in needed care. The recent Army Task Force on Behavioral Health report acknowledged the need to reach out and involve family members. Given the impact of family support and strain on warriors' resilience and recovery, more must be done to provide needed mental health care to veterans' family members. Meeting warriors where they are within the community or through peer outreach has been found to be an effective first step in engaging warriors in mental health care. DOD should do more to enlist these resources as an effective method to get servicemembers to seek help.

DOD and the VA must work collaboratively, not simply to improve access to mental health care, but to identify and further research the reasons for—and solutions to—warriors' resistance to seeking such care. With a high percentage of servicemembers not seeking mental health treatment, it is important to ascertain which modalities of treatment might be effective. There should be greater investment in researching treatment efficacy, so more evidence based treatments can be rolled out to provide greater flexibility in mental health care that would engage more servicemembers.

In addition to identifying and resolving reasons warriors often don't engage in mental health care, DOD and VA must do more to measure what current programs are working. There are a myriad of suicide prevention and resiliency programs within the DOD, yet it remains unclear how effectiveness is measured or how these programs are coordinated to provide real assistance to those in need no matter their service, where they are stationed or deployed.

The Army report on behavioral health highlighted an expanded program of behavioral health providers at the brigade level. While increasing access to care is an important step in providing needed treatment, ensuring efficacy is critical. DOD must be able to measure a range of pertinent mental health matters, including timely access, patient outcomes, staffing needs, numbers needing or provided treatment, provider productivity, and treatment capacity. Greater transparency and continued oversight into DOD's mental health care operations are starting points for closing gaps in servicemembers' mental health treatment.

The coalition recommends Congress:

- Continue efforts to promote engagement in and destigmatization of mental health care
- Continue to press for research on most effective treatments, coordination of programs, and measures of efficacy.

DOD-VA Integrated Disability Evaluation/Legacy Systems (IDES)

TMC still hears too many emotional stories of "low-balling" disabled servicemembers' disability ratings, or troops separated with service-connected conditions

not documented or reported in records, causing members with significant disabling conditions to be separated and turned over to the VA rather than being medically retired—a troublesome trend today, especially for those in the Guard and Reserves.

Congress has taken positive steps to address this situation, including establishment of the Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) to give previously separated servicemembers an opportunity to appeal too-low disability ratings.

The DOD-VA IDES pilot has been fully implemented and expanded, and is considered to be much more streamlined and non-adversarial, and more mechanisms are in place to help members navigate and advocate for the member through the process, unlike its legacy system counterpart.

Unfortunately, some services still use loopholes, such as designating disorders as “existing prior to service,” even though the VA rated the condition as “service-connected” and the member was deemed fit enough to serve in a combat zone. The coalition believes strongly that once we have sent a soldier, sailor, airman, or marine to war, the member should be given the benefit of the doubt that any condition subsequently found should not be considered as existing prior to service.

The coalition also agrees with the opinion expressed by former Secretary Gates that a member forced from service for wartime injuries should not be separated, but should be awarded a high enough rating to be retired for disability.

The coalition recommends Congress:

- Preserve the statutory 30 percent disability threshold for medical retirement in order to provide lifetime TRICARE coverage for those who are injured while on active duty
- Reform the DOD disability retirement system to require inclusion of all unfitting conditions and accepting the VA’s “service-connected” rating
- Ensure any restructure of the DOD and VA disability and compensation systems does not inadvertently reduce compensation levels for disabled servicemembers
- Eliminate distinctions between disabilities incurred in combat vs. non-combat when determining benefits eligibility for retirement
- Tightening the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) (as recommended by the RWTF) to include:
 - Create a “joint” formal physical evaluation board in order to standardize disability ratings by each of the Services
 - Mandate in policy that all servicemembers entering into a Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) be contacted by the MEB outreach lawyer to help navigate the board process upon notification that a narrative summary will be completed
- Pursue improvements in identifying and properly boarding (medical evaluation and physical evaluation boards) Guard and Reserve members (to include the IRR) who have been wounded or incurred injuries or illnesses while activated but have had their conditions manifest or worsen post deactivation such as establishing policies that allow for the rapid issuance of title 10 orders to affected Reserve component (as recommended by the RWTF)
- Seek legislation to eliminate legacy DES so that that servicemembers who are placed on the Temporary Disability Retirement List (TDRL) are afforded the opportunity to have the VA rate their disability by the IDES upon their removal from the TDRL
- Revise the VA schedule for rating disabilities (VASRD) to improve the care and treatment of those wounded, ill, and injured, especially those diagnosed with PTSD and TBI
- Bar the designation of disabling conditions as “existing prior to service” for servicemembers who have been deployed to a combat zone

Caregiver/Family Support Services

The sad reality is that, for the most severely wounded, ill, or injured servicemembers, their family members or other loved ones often become their full-time caregiver. Many are forced to give up their jobs, homes, and savings to care for their loved one—an incredible and overwhelming burden for these individuals to shoulder.

The coalition believes the government has an obligation to provide reasonable compensation and training for such caregivers, who never dreamed that their own well-being, careers, and futures would be devastated by military-caused injuries to their servicemembers.

The coalition appreciates the subcommittee’s sustained support for caregivers and requests additional steps be taken to ensure that nondependent caregivers (e.g., parents and siblings) who have had to sacrifice their own employment and health coverage are provided health and respite care while the injured member remains on

active duty, commensurate with what the VA authorizes for caregivers of wounded, ill, and injured veterans.

In a similar vein, many wounded or otherwise-disabled members experience significant difficulty transitioning to medical retirement status. To assist in this process, consideration should be given to authorizing medically retired members and their families to remain in on-base housing for up to 1 year after retirement, in the same way that families are allowed to do when a member dies on active duty.

Another important care continuity issue for the severely wounded, ill, and injured is the failure to keep caregivers of these personnel involved in every step of the care and follow-up process, even when they have official documentation authorizing them as a caregiver or guardian. TMC continues to hear with great frequency, that clinicians and administrative staff in military treatment or VA facilities exclude caregiver participation, talking only to the injured member or excluding them completely in the process.

Congress, DOD, and the VA have worked to get essential information to the wounded, ill, and injured and their caregivers. Similar efforts are urgently needed to educate medical providers and administrative staff at all levels that the final responsibility for ensuring execution of prescribed regimens of care for severely wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers typically rests with the caregivers, who must be kept involved and informed on all aspects of these members' treatment, appointments, and medical evaluations.

The coalition recommends Congress:

- Ensure wounded, ill, and injured families and caregivers are an integral part of the rehabilitation and recovery team and be included in and educated about medical care and treatment, disability evaluation system processes, development and implementation of the comprehensive recovery plan, and receive DOD-VA support and guidance throughout the process
- Provide enhanced training of DOD and VA medical and support staff on the vital importance of involving and informing designated caregivers in treatment of and communication with severely wounded, ill, and injured personnel
- Provide health and respite care for non-dependent caregivers (e.g., parents and siblings) who have had to sacrifice their own employment and health coverage while the injured member remains on active duty, commensurate with what the VA authorizes for eligible caregivers of medically retired or separated members
- Ensure consistency of DOD and VA caregiver benefits to ensure seamless transition from DOD to VA programs
- Extend eligibility for residence in on-base housing for up to 1 year for medically retired and severely wounded, ill, and injured members and their families, or until the servicemember receives a VA disability rating, whichever is longer

Guard and Reserve Health Care

The coalition is very grateful for sustained progress in providing reservists' families a continuum of government-sponsored health care coverage options throughout their military careers into retirement, but key gaps remain.

DOD took the first step in the 1990s by establishing a policy to pay the Federal Health Benefits Program (FEHB) premiums for G-R employees of the Department during periods of their active duty service.

Thanks to this subcommittee's efforts, considerable additional progress has been made in subsequent years to provide at least some form of military health coverage at each stage of a Reserve component member's life, including TRICARE Reserve Select for actively drilling Guard/Reserve families and TRICARE Retired Reserve for "gray area" retirees.

But some deserving segments of the Guard and Reserve population remain without needed coverage, including post-deployed members of the Individual Ready Reserve and early Reserve retirees who are in receipt of non-regular retired pay before age 60.

In other cases, the coalition believes it would serve Guard/Reserve members' and DOD's common interests to explore additional options for delivery of care to Guard and Reserve families. As deployment rates decline, for example, it would be cost-effective to establish an option under which DOD would subsidize continuation of employer coverage for family members during (hopefully less-frequent) periods of activation rather than funding year-round TRS coverage.

TMC continues to support closing the remaining gaps to establish a continuum of health coverage for operational reserve families.

The coalition recommends:

- Authorizing TRICARE for early Reserve retirees who are in receipt of retired pay prior to age 60

- Authorizing premium-based TRICARE coverage for members of the Individual Ready Reserve after being called to active service for a cumulative period of at least 12 months
- Permitting employers to pay TRS premiums for reservist-employees as a bottom-line incentive for hiring and retaining them
- Authorizing an option for the government to subsidize continuation of a civilian employer's family coverage during periods of activation, similar to FEHBP coverage for activated Guard-Reserve employees of Federal agencies
- Extending corrective dental care following return from a call-up to ensure G-R members meet dental readiness standards
- Allowing eligibility in Continued Health Care Benefits Program for selected reservists who are voluntarily separating and subject to disenrollment from TRS
- Allowing beneficiaries of the FEHBP who are Selected reservists the option of participating in TRICARE Reserve Select
- Improving the pre- and post-deployment health assessment program to address a range of mental/behavioral health issues such as substance abuse and suicide
- Allow for access to a full range of evidenced-based care and services for Reserve component members and their families, particularly during periods of re-integration back into the community

Additional TRICARE Prime Issues

The coalition strongly advocates for the transparency of healthcare information via the patient electronic record between both the MTF provider and network providers. Additionally, institutional and provider healthcare quality information should be available to all beneficiaries so that they can make better informed decisions with their healthcare choices.

Most importantly, the coalition is highly concerned regarding the growing dissatisfaction among TRICARE Prime enrollees in the Prime Service Areas (PSAs). The dissatisfaction arises with the impending impact this will have on beneficiaries and the elimination of many PSAs under the new contract.

This will entail a substantive disruption in health care delivery for thousands of beneficiaries who will be required to find different providers and will change the continuity of care for beneficiaries who have difficulty accessing care in many areas of the country. The beneficiary will also bear more of the cost of their healthcare by covering co-payments.

Now that the three managed care contractors are in sync, this reduction will commence on October 1, 2013 with the beneficiaries who live in the areas where Prime service will be terminated.

The Military Coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Authorize beneficiaries affected by Prime Service Area changes to be grandfathered in their present arrangement until they either relocate or change their current primary care provider
- Require reports from DOD and the managed care support contractors on actions being taken to ensure those affected by the Prime Service Area reductions will be able to maintain continuity of care from their existing provider or receive an adequate selection of providers from which to obtain care
- Require increased DOD efforts to ensure electronic health record consistency between MTFs and purchased care sectors and provide beneficiaries with information to assist in informed decisionmaking

Special Needs Families

The coalition is grateful that the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 established a year pilot program making family members of currently serving and retired members of all Services diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder eligible for applied behavioral analysis therapy (ABA) under the TRICARE program.

The coalition is very pleased the original provision was amended to include all uniformed services, but is disappointed the new authority excludes family members with other diagnoses for which ABA therapy is beneficial.

The coalition also is concerned that the pilot program was funded for only 1 year.

The Military Coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Authorize ABA coverage as a permanent benefit under the TRICARE basic program;
- Include eligibility to other developmental disabilities that may benefit from ABA
- Ensure permanent funding for this critical therapy; and

- Ensure any further adjustments to TRICARE eligibility apply equally to all seven uniformed services.

Additional TRICARE Standard Issues

The coalition appreciates the subcommittee's continuing interest in the specific problems unique to TRICARE Standard beneficiaries. TRICARE Standard beneficiaries need assistance in finding participating providers within a reasonable time and distance from their home. This is particularly important with the expansion of TRICARE Reserve Select and the upcoming change in the Prime Service Areas, which will place thousands more beneficiaries into TRICARE Standard.

The coalition is grateful that the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2012 extended through 2015 the requirement for DOD to survey participation of providers in TRICARE Standard.

However, we are concerned that DOD has not yet established benchmarks for adequacy of provider participation, as required by section 711(a)(2) of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2008. Participation by half of the providers in a locality may suffice if there is not a large Standard beneficiary population, but could severely constrain access in other areas with higher beneficiary density.

The coalition hopes to see an objective participation standard (perhaps based on the number of beneficiaries per provider) that would help shed more light on which locations have participation shortfalls of primary care managers and specialists that require intervention.

Further, the coalition believes the Department should be required to take action to increase provider participation in localities where participation falls short of the standard.

A source of continuing concern is the TRICARE Standard inpatient copay for retired members, which now stands at \$708 per day or 25 percent of billed charges. The coalition believes this amount already is excessive, and should continue to remain capped at that rate for the foreseeable future.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Bar any further increase in the TRICARE Standard inpatient copay for the foreseeable future
- Insist on immediate delivery of an adequacy threshold for provider participation, below which additional action is required to improve such participation to meet the threshold
- Require a specific report on provider participation adequacy in the localities where Prime Service Areas will be discontinued under the new TRICARE contracts
- Increase locator support to TRICARE Standard beneficiaries seeking providers who will accept new Standard patients, particularly for primary care and mental health specialties

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVE FORCES

Since September 11, 2001, more than 865,500 Guard and Reserve servicemembers have been called up, including about 285,000 who have served multiple tours. There is no precedent in American history for this sustained reliance on warrior-citizens and their families. To their credit, Guard and Reserve combat veterans continue to reenlist, but recurring activations and deployments cannot be sustained under Operational Reserve policy without adjustments to the compensation package.

Guard and Reserve members and families face unique challenges in their readjustment following active duty service. Unlike active duty personnel, many Guard and Reserve members return to employers who question their contributions in the civilian workplace, especially as multiple deployments have become the norm. Many Guard-Reserve troops return with varying degrees of combat-related injuries and stress disorders, and encounter additional difficulties after they return that can cost them their jobs, careers, and families.

Despite the continuing efforts of the Services and Congress, most Guard and Reserve families do not have access to the same level of counseling and support that active duty members have. The coalition is encouraged that last year Congress enacted measures to attack the epidemic of suicides in the total force, expand access to behavioral health services and create a pilot to provide transition services outside of active duty bases. Properly implemented, these initiatives will help, but more remains to be done.

Operational Reserve Retention and Retirement Reform

Congress took the first step in modernizing the Reserve retirement system with enactment of early retirement eligibility for certain reservists activated for at least 90 continuous days served since January 28, 2008.

More recently, Congress passed an historic measure authorizing up to 60,000 reservists to perform active duty missions for up to 1 year without a formal emergency declaration so long as the missions are pre-planned and budgeted.

The coalition believes this change further underscores the need to ensure Guard and Reserve members' compensation keeps pace with the Nation's ever-increasing reliance on them. The greater the demands placed on them, the greater the need to enhance inducements that are essential to sustain the operational Reserve Force over the long term.

Repeated, extended activations make it more difficult to sustain a full civilian career and impede reservists' ability to build a full civilian retirement, 401(k), et cetera. Regardless of statutory protections, periodic long-term absences from the civilian workplace can only limit Guard/Reserve members' upward mobility, employability and financial security. Further, strengthening the Reserve retirement system will serve as an incentive to retaining critical mid-career officers and NCOs for continued service and thereby enhance readiness.

As a minimum, the next step in modernizing the Reserve retirement system is to eliminate the inequity inherent in the current fiscal year retirement calculation, which credits 90 days of active service for early retirement purposes only if it occurs within the same fiscal year. A 90-day tour served from January through March is credited, but a 120-day tour served from August through November is worthless (because the latter covers 60 days in each of 2 fiscal years).

Moreover, the law-change authorizing early retirement credit for qualifying active duty served after 28 Jan 2008 requires early Reserve retirees to pay exorbitant TRICARE Retired Reserve premiums if they wish to have government health insurance before age 60.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Eliminate the fiscal year limitation which effectively denies full early retirement credit for active duty tours that span the start of a fiscal year (1 October)
- Modernize the Reserve retirement system to incentivize continued service beyond 20 years and provide fair recognition of increased requirements for active duty service
- Authorize early retirement credit for all active duty tours of at least 90 days retroactive to September 11, 2001

Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program

Congress has provided increased resources to support the transition of warrior-citizens back into the community. But program execution remains spotty from State to State and falls short for those returning Federal Reserve warriors in widely dispersed regional commands. Programs should meet a standard level of family support within each State. Military and civilian leaders at all levels must improve the coordination and delivery of services for the entire operational Reserve Force. Many communities are eager to provide support and do it well. But Yellow Ribbon efforts in a number of locations amount to little more than PowerPoint slides and little or no actual implementation.

DOD must ensure that State-level best practices—such as those in Maryland, Minnesota, and New Hampshire—are applied for all operational Reserve Force members and their families, and that Federal Reserve veterans have equal access to services and support available to National Guard veterans. Community groups, employers and service organization efforts need to be encouraged and better coordinated to supplement unit, component, Service and VA outreach and services.

The Military Coalition urges immediate implementation of the 2-year pilot for providing TAP services 'outside the gate' of active duty bases and broader expansion as soon as possible. Congress should hold oversight hearings and direct additional improvements in coordination, collaboration and consistency of Yellow Ribbon services between States.

Reserve Compensation System

The increasing demands of qualifications, mental skills, physical fitness, and training readiness on the Guard and Reserve to perform national security missions at home and abroad and increased training requirements indicate that the compensation system needs to be improved to attract and retain individuals into the Guard/Reserve. The added responsibility of returning to active duty multiple times over the course of a Reserve career requires improvements to the compensation package and to make it more equitable with the Active component.

The coalition recommends subcommittee authorize:

- Credit for all inactive duty training points earned annually toward Reserve retirement

- Parity in special incentive pay for career enlisted/officer special aviation incentive pay, diving special duty pay, and pro-pay for Reserve component medical professionals
- The recalculation of retirement points after 1 year of activation
 - The 2010 NDAA authorized certain flag officers to recalculate retirement pay after 1 year of active duty, and we recommend this authority be extended to all ranks

Guard/Reserve GI Bill

The coalition is most grateful to Congress for passage of the Post-9/11 GI Bill (Chapter 33, 38 U.S.C.), which includes a provision for reservists to accrue benefits for operational active duty service. However, Selected Reserve GI Bill benefits (Chapter 1606, 10 U.S.C.) have not been adjusted proportionally for more than 13 years.

The coalition recommends the subcommittee:

- Work with the Veterans Affairs Committee to restore basic Reserve Montgomery GI Bill benefits for initially joining the Selected Reserve to the historic benchmark of 47–50 percent of the active duty MGIB
- Integrate Reserve MGIB benefits currently in title 10 with active duty veteran educational benefit programs under title 38
- Enact academic protections for mobilized Guard and Reserve students, including refund guarantees

Guard/Reserve Family Support Programs

The coalition appreciates the upgrades in outreach programs and services for returning Guard-Reserve families. Family support programs promote better communication with servicemembers and help underwrite morale and overall readiness.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Review the adequacy of programs to meet the special information and support needs of families of individual Reserve augmentees or those who are geographically dispersed
- Foster programs among military and community leaders to support servicemembers and families during all phases of deployments
- Provide preventive counseling services for servicemembers and families
- Authorize child care for family readiness group meetings and drill time and respite care during deployments
- Improve the joint family readiness program to facilitate understanding and sharing of information between all family members

RETIREE ISSUES

Military Retirement Reform

Whenever military budgets get tight, budget analysts, commissions and chartered task forces propose military retirement cutbacks.

Past defense leaders resisted such efforts as being detrimental to retention and readiness. In contrast, former Secretary of Defense Gates and Panetta voiced support for significant retirement changes. The administration's recently proposed (2012) BRAC like commission to modernize the military compensation system reflects a lack of understanding about the radical differences between uniform service and civil careers.

The coalition appreciates Congress' wise action last year in modifying the composition of the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission and eliminating restrictions under which its recommendations may be considered by Congress.

We strongly believe that any proposed changes recommended by the Commission must be considered in light of previous congressional reform efforts and thoroughly vetted in the public forum.

The basic principles of the existing compensation system were designed to foster and maintain the profession of arms as a "dignified, respected, sought after, and honorable career" as outlined in the DOD's Military Compensation Background Papers.

The unique military retirement package we have today was formulated to offset the extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a service career. These benefits provide a powerful incentive for top-quality people to serve 20–30 years in uniform, despite the burden of sacrifices as eloquently articulated by the Secretary of the Air Force during his January 18, 1978 testimony before the President's Commission on Military Compensation:

"The military services are unique callings. The demands we place on our military men and women are unlike those of any other country. Our world-wide interests and commitments place heavy burdens and responsibilities on their shoulders. They must be prepared to live anywhere, fight anywhere, and maintain high morale and combat efficiency under frequently adverse and uncomfortable conditions. They are asked to undergo frequent exposure to risk, long hours, periodic relocation and family separation. They accept abridgement of freedom of speech, political and organizational activity, and control over living and working conditions. They are all part of the very personal price our military people pay.

"Yet all of this must be done in the light of—and in comparison to—a civilian sector that is considerably different. We ask military people to be highly disciplined when society places a heavy premium on individual freedom, to maintain a steady and acute sense of purpose when some in society question the value of our institutions and debate our national goals. In short, we ask them to surrender elements of their freedom in order to serve and defend a society that has the highest degree of liberty and independence in the world. I might add, a society with the highest standard of living and an unmatched quality of life.

"Implicit in this concept of military service must be long-term security and a system of institutional supports for the serviceman and his family which are beyond the level of compensation commonly offered in the private, industrial sector."

There is no better illustration of that reality than the past 11 years of war. Absent the career drawing power of the current 20-year retirement system and its promised benefits, the coalition asserts that sustaining anything approaching the needed retention rates over such an extended period of combat deployments would have been simply impossible.

The crucial element to sustaining a high-quality, career military force is establishing a strong bond of reciprocal commitment between the servicemember and the government. If that reciprocity is not fulfilled, if we break faith with those who serve, retention and readiness will inevitably suffer.

The coalition believes the government has a unique responsibility to this small segment of Americans that goes far beyond any civilian employer's obligation to its employees. We actively induce these citizens to subordinate their interests to that of America's for periods of 20 to 30 years. No private employer would ever consider making such a request.

The uniformed services retirement system has had its critics since the 1970s and even earlier.

In the 1980s, budget pressures led to amending retirement rules twice for new service entrants:

- Basing retired pay calculations on the high-36-month average of basic pay instead of final basic pay (1980), and
- Enacting the REDUX system that cut 20-year retired pay value by more than 25 percent (1986).

At the time the REDUX plan was being considered, then-Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger strongly, but unsuccessfully, opposed it (see attached letter), arguing the change would harm retention and degrade readiness. "It says in absolute terms," said Weinberger, "that the unique, dangerous, and vital sacrifices they routinely make are not worth the taxpayer dollars they receive."

When his prediction of adverse retention consequences proved all too accurate in the 1990s, Congress repealed REDUX in 1999 at the urging of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Since then innumerable studies and task forces have recommended even more dramatic changes, usually either to save money, to make the system more like those offered under civilian programs, or both.

Most recently, groups such as the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, the Debt Reduction Task Force, the Sustainable Defense Task Force, and the Defense Business Board's (DBB) "Modernizing the Military Retirement" Task Group have all recommended radically revamping the system more on civilian lines, significantly reducing military retirement compensation.

Secretary Gates criticized the 20-year retirement system as "unfair" to those who leave service before that point, pointing out that vesting options are provided to civilian workers. Therefore he directed the DBB to identify alternative options. In his final appearance before the Senate, Gates endorsed an early vesting program, noting, "70 to 80 percent of the force does not stay until retirement but leaves with nothing."

However, there is no support for spending more money on military retirement, so the vesting options proposed to date—including those of the DBB and the DOD-sponsored 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC)—would fund that new benefit by imposing dramatic benefit cuts for the 17 percent who complete decades in uniform.

All too aware of the lessons learned, Congress has wisely ignored and dismissed these ivory-tower recommendations which propose far greater retirement cuts than REDUX entailed.

The existing retirement system is often characterized as “inflexible”, limiting the ability of Service personnel managers to more precisely and effectively manage the force. The coalition strongly disagrees.

The Services already have substantial authority to adjust force structure by revising high-year-of-tenure limits to enforce the unique military “up-or-out” promotion system, to incentivize voluntary separations and to bring about voluntary or mandatory early retirements.

The Services routinely tighten retention and reenlistment incentives and other restrictions when budget considerations create a need for additional separations and retirements. When necessary, Congress has provided additional special drawdown authorities to create the right force structure.

However, the reality is that precisely planned force management initiatives are regularly abandoned in the wake of real-world events that often force dramatic reversals of planned actions. Reform measures which envision delaying retirement until age 57 or 60 belie the reality that the Services don’t need or want the vast majority of members to stay in uniform that long.

Service desires for unlimited flexibility to shape the force may be appropriate for the management of hardware and other non-sentient resources. However, the Services are dependent upon attracting and retaining smart people who understand all too well when their leaders place no limits on the sacrifices that may be demanded of them, but also wish to reserve the right to change the rules on them and kick them out at will . . . even while building a system that assumes they will be willing to serve under these conditions until age 60.

Servicemembers from whom we demand so much deserve some stability of career expectations in return.

The coalition believes “civilianizing” the military benefit package would dramatically undermine the primary military career retention incentive and would be disastrous for retention and readiness, as they increase the incentives to leave and reduce the incentives for career service.

Moreover, we believe it is irresponsible to focus on budget and “civilian equity” concerns while ignoring the primary purpose of the retirement system—to ensure a strong and top-quality career force in spite of arduous service conditions which no civilians experience and few are willing to accept.

America will remain the world’s greatest superpower only as long as it continues to fulfill its reciprocal obligation to the All-Volunteer Career Force.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to oppose any initiative which would “civilianize” the military retirement system, ignore the lessons of the ill-fated REDUX initiative, and inadequately recognize the unique and extraordinary demands and sacrifices inherent in a military career.

Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLAs)

In recent years, several commissions have proposed adjusting the Consumer Price Index (CPI) methodology to the so-called “chained CPI” calculation as a means of holding down COLA growth for military and Federal civilian retired pay, Social Security and all other Federal annuities over time.

Proponents of the chained CPI say it more accurately reflects changes in annuitants’ cost of living by recognizing that their purchasing behavior changes as prices change. If the price of beef rises, for example, consumers may purchase more chicken and less beef.

What chained CPI doesn’t capture is increasing costs where there are no adequate substitutes, such as rent or utilities. The real issue is whether chained CPI measuring changes in prices or changes in the quality of life. Following the logical progression to an extreme we could find consumers substituting hot dogs for chicken, et cetera.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics has estimated that implementation of the chained CPI would depress COLAs by about 0.25 to 0.3 percentage point per year.

The DOD actuary estimates that inflation will average 3 percent per year over the long term.

Using those two estimates, applying the chained-CPI COLAs for a servicemember retiring at age 42 would yield about 10 percent less in his or her retired paycheck

at age 85 relative to the current COLA system. The longer you live, the worse it gets.

Additionally, some commissions have proposed delaying any COLAs on military retired pay until age 60 or later, barring COLAs on annuity levels above some set dollar amount, or reducing the CPI by one-half percent or a full percentage point per year.

The coalition believes such initiatives would constitute a breach of faith with military people and constitute a disproportional penalty.

COLAs are particularly important to military retirees, disabled retirees, and survivors because they start drawing their annuities at younger ages than most other COLA-eligibles and thus experience the compounding effects over a greater number of years. To the extent that COLAs fail to keep up with living costs, real purchasing power continues to decline ever more dramatically as long as one lives.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Reject the chained CPI as a basis for adjusting military retired pay
- Ensure the continued fulfillment of congressional COLA intent, as expressed in House National Security Committee Print of title 37, U.S.C.: “to provide every military retired member the same purchasing power of the retired pay to which he was entitled at the time of retirement [and ensure it is] not, at any time in the future . . . eroded by subsequent increases in consumer prices”
- Ensure equal treatment of all uniformed service personnel, to include NOAA/USPHS/USCG personnel, with respect to any retirement/COLA legislation

Concurrent Receipt

Congress clearly recognized the inequity of the disability offset to earned retired pay during the past decade and has gone to great lengths to establish a process to end or phase out the offset for many disabled retirees. The coalition is extremely grateful for the subcommittee’s efforts to continue progress in easing the adverse effects of the offset.

In that vein, we are very pleased Congress identified resources to fix a long-standing inadvertent “glitch” in the statutory computation formula for Combat-Related Special Compensation (CRSC). This was clearly a victory for our war wounded veterans.

The coalition strongly believes in the principle that career military members earn their retired pay by service alone, and that those unfortunate enough to suffer a service-caused disability in the process should have any VA disability compensation from the VA added to, not subtracted from, their service-earned military retired pay.

In 2010, we were very optimistic that another very deserving group of disabled retirees—those forced into medical retirement short of 20-years of service—would become eligible for concurrent receipt when the White House included a concurrent receipt proposal in the Budget Resolution—the first time in history any administration had ever proposed such a fix.

The proposal would have expanded concurrent receipt eligibility over a 5 year period to all those forced to retire early from Service due to a disability, injury, or illness that was service-connected (chapter 61 retirees). We were dismayed that, despite the subcommittee’s leadership efforts and White House support, the provision has not yet been enacted—an extremely disappointing outcome for a most deserving group of disabled retirees.

We recognize only too well the challenges associated with adding new mandatory spending provisions in this difficult budget environment. But making at least some progress to address this grievous inequity (e.g., covering all 100-percent disabled retirees with less than 20 years of service) remains an important goal.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to continue seeking to expand Concurrent Retirement and Disability Payments (CRDP) to disabled retirees not eligible under the current statute, with first priority for vesting of earned retirement credit for Chapter 61 retirees with less than 20 years of service.

Fair Treatment for Servicemembers Affected by Force Reductions

Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s the services had several drawdown tools at their disposal to incentivize members to voluntarily leave the Service: Voluntary Separation Incentive (VSI), Special Separation Benefit (SSB), and Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA). The recently reauthorized TERA will greatly aid the Services in anticipation of significant force drawdowns and combat forces depart southwest Asia.

During any force reduction, servicemembers who intend to make the Service a career are forced out. We believe the Nation should recognize their service and provide a “transportable” benefit for those that have their careers curtailed involuntarily short of 20 years.

The coalition emphasizes that this limited “vesting” initiative should be applied only during periods of significant force reductions and funding for it should not come at the expense of those who serve 20 years or more.

Authorizing separated servicemembers the ability to contribute part or all of their involuntary or voluntary separation pay into their Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) account would appropriately recognize their past service and provide a level of “transportable” career benefit under these difficult times.

The coalition recommends enacting temporary legislation that would allow members separated during periods of significant force reductions to deposit part or all of their involuntary separation pay or VSP into their TSP account.

SURVIVOR ISSUES

The coalition is grateful to the subcommittee for its significant efforts in the past decade to improve the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP), especially its major achievement in 2005 eliminating the Military Widows Tax—the Social Security offset that SBP survivors encountered upon attaining age 62. Yet, there is still more to do when looking at the plight of our widows.

SBP–DIC Offset

The coalition believes strongly that current law is unfair in reducing military SBP annuities by the amount of any survivor benefits payable from the Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) program.

If the surviving spouse of a retiree who dies of a service-connected cause is entitled to DIC from the Department of Veterans Affairs and if the retiree was also enrolled in SBP, the surviving spouse’s SBP annuity is reduced by the amount of DIC. A pro-rata share of the SBP premiums is refunded to the widow upon the member’s death in a lump sum, but with no interest. This offset also affects all survivors of members who are killed on active duty.

The coalition believes SBP and DIC payments are paid for different reasons. SBP is insurance purchased by the retiree and is intended to provide a portion of retired pay to the survivor. DIC is a special indemnity compensation paid to the survivor when a member’s service causes his or her premature death. In such cases, the VA indemnity compensation should be added to the SBP annuity the retiree paid for, not substituted for it.

In comparison, Federal civilian retirees who are disabled veterans and die of military-service-connected causes can receive DIC without losing any of their Federal civilian SBP benefits.

Unfortunately, in every SBP–DIC case, active duty or retired, the true premium extracted by the service from both the member and the survivor was the ultimate one—the very life of the member. This reality was underscored by the August 2009 Federal Court of Appeals ruling in *Sharp v. U.S.* which found, “After all, the servicemember paid for both benefits: SBP with premiums; DIC with his life.”

The Veterans Disability Benefits Commission (VDBC) reviewed the SBP–DIC issue, among other DOD/VA benefit topics. The VDBC’s final report to Congress in 2007 agreed with the coalition in finding that the offset is inappropriate and should be eliminated.

In 2005, then-Speaker Pelosi and other House leaders made repeal of the SBP–DIC offset a centerpiece of their GI Bill of Rights for the 21st Century.

Leadership has made great progress in delivering on other elements of that plan, but the only progress to date on the SBP–DIC offset has been the enactment a small monthly Special Survivor Indemnity Allowance (SSIA).

The coalition recognizes that the subcommittee’s initiative in the fiscal year 2008 defense bill to establish the SSIA was intended as a first, admittedly very modest, step in a longer-term effort to phase out the DIC offset to SBP.

We’re very grateful for the subcommittee’s subsequent efforts to increase SSIA amounts as additional steps toward the goal of eliminating the offset.

While fully acknowledging the subcommittee’s good-faith efforts to win more substantive progress, the coalition shares the extreme disappointment and sense of abandonment of the SBP–DIC widows who are forced to sacrifice up to \$1,215 each month and are being asked to be satisfied with a \$90 monthly rebate.

The coalition understands the mandatory-spending constraints the subcommittee has faced in seeking redress, but also points out that those constraints have been waived for many, many far more expensive initiatives, including the recent extension of civilian unemployment benefits.

The coalition believes widows whose sponsors’ deaths were caused by military service should not be last in line for redress.

The coalition urges the subcommittee to:

- Continue pursuing ways to repeal the SBP–DIC offset
- Authorize SBP annuities to be placed into a Special Needs Trust for permanently disabled survivors who otherwise lose eligibility for state programs because of means testing
- Reduce the age for paid-up SBP to age 67 for those who joined the military at age 17, 18, or 19
- Reinstate SBP annuities to survivors who transfer it to their children when the children reach majority, or when a subsequent remarriage ends in death or divorce

Final Retired Paycheck

Under current law, DFAS recoups from military widows/widowers' bank accounts all retired pay for the month in which a retiree dies. Subsequently, DFAS pays the survivor a pro-rated amount for the number of days of that month in which the retiree was alive. This often creates hardships for survivors who have already spent that pay on rent, food, et cetera, and who routinely are required to wait several months for DFAS to start paying SBP benefits.

The coalition believes this is an extremely insensitive policy imposed by the government at the most traumatic time for a deceased member's next of kin. Unlike his or her active duty counterpart, a retiree's survivor receives no death gratuity. Many older retirees do not have adequate insurance to provide even a moderate financial cushion for surviving spouses.

In contrast to the law governing military retired pay treatment of survivors, the title 38 statute requires the VA to make full payment of the final month's VA disability compensation to the survivor of a disabled veteran.

The disparity between DOD and VA policy on this matter is indefensible. Congress should do for retirees' widows the same thing it did 10 years ago to protect veterans' widows.

TMC urges the subcommittee to authorize survivors of retired members to retain the final month's retired pay for the month in which the retiree dies.

SUMMARY

The Military Coalition again thanks the subcommittee for your unfailing support of the entire uniformed service community and for taking our concerns and priorities into consideration as you deliberate on the future of the one weapon system that has never let our Nation down—the men and women who wear and have worn the uniform and their families.

MASTER CHIEF JOSEPH L. BARNES, USN (RETIRED), NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION AND CO-CHAIRMAN, THE MILITARY COALITION

Joseph L. (Joe) Barnes is a retired Navy Master Chief and serves as the Fleet Reserve Association's (FRA's) National Executive Director. He is a member of FRA's National Board of Directors, chairs the Association's National Committee on Legislative Service, and is responsible for managing the organization's National Headquarters in Alexandria, VA. In addition, he is president of the FRA Education Foundation which oversees the Association's scholarship program that presented awards totaling \$128,000 in 2012.

Barnes joined FRA's National Headquarters team in 1993 and prior to assuming his current position in 2002, he served as FRA's Director of Legislative Programs. During his tenure, the Association realized significant legislative gains, and was recognized with a certificate award for excellence in government relations from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

In addition to his FRA duties, Barnes is Co-Chairman of the Military Coalition (TMC) and co-chairs the Coalition's Personnel, Compensation and Commissaries Committee. He is also a member of the Defense Commissary Agency's Patron Council and an ex-officio member of the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation's Board of Directors.

He received the U.S. Coast Guard's Meritorious Public Service Award and was appointed an Honorary Member of the U.S. Coast Guard in 2003.

While on active duty, he was the public affairs director for the U.S. Navy Band in Washington, DC, and directed marketing and promotional efforts for national tours, network radio and television appearances, and major special events in the Nation's capital. His awards include the Defense Meritorious Service and Navy Commendation Medals.

Barnes holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in public relations management from The American University, Washington, DC. He earned

the Certified Association Executive (CAE) designation from ASAE in 2003 and is an accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators (IABC).

KATHLEEN B. MOAKLER, DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Mrs. Moakler has been associated with the National Military Family Association since 1995 as a member of the headquarters staff. She was appointed to Government Relations Director in October 2007. In that position, she monitors the range of issues relevant to the quality of life of the families of the seven uniformed services and coordinates the six members of the Government Relations staff. Mrs. Moakler represents the interests of military families on a variety of advisory panels and working groups, including the Military Family Readiness Council.

Mrs. Moakler is co-chair of the Survivor Programs Committee and the Personnel/Compensation/Commissaries Committee for the Military Coalition (TMC), a consortium of 34 military and veteran organizations. She is often called to comment on issues pertaining to military families for such media outlets as the NY Times, CNN, NBC News, NPR and the Military Times. She writes regularly for military focused publications.

During her husband's 28 year Army career, Mrs. Moakler served in various volunteer leadership positions in civilian and military community organizations, as well as working with many military community programs including hospital consumer boards, commanders' advisory boards, family readiness groups, church councils, youth programs, and the Army Family Action Plan at all levels. She believes that communication is paramount in the efficient delivery of services and the fostering of a rich community life for military families. She holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the State University of New York at Albany. Mrs. Moakler has been awarded the Army Commanders Award for Public Service and the President's Volunteer Service Award.

Mrs. Moakler is also a military mom. Her daughter, Megan, is an Army Major and nurse who has served two tours in Iraq and son, Matthew, is an Army major and Operation New Dawn veteran. Both are presently stationed at Fort Belvoir, VA. Her oldest son, Marty, works for Hulu.com and is an aspiring writer/actor in Los Angeles, CA. Mrs. Moakler and her husband, Colonel Martin W. Moakler, Jr. USA (retired), reside in Alexandria, VA.

COLONEL STEVE STROBRIDGE (USAF-RET.), DIRECTOR, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, MILITARY OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA (MOAA); AND CO-CHAIRMAN, THE MILITARY COALITION

Steve Strobbridge, a native of Vermont, is a 1969 graduate from Syracuse University. Commissioned through ROTC, he was called to active duty in October 1969.

After several assignments as a personnel officer and commander in Texas, Thailand, and North Carolina, he was assigned to the Pentagon from 1977 to 1981 as a compensation and legislation analyst at Headquarters USAF. While in this position, he researched and developed legislation on military pay, health care, retirement and survivor benefits issues.

In 1981, he attended the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk, VA, en route to a January 1982 transfer to Ramstein AB, Germany. Following assignments as Chief, Officer Assignments and assistant for Senior Officer Management at HQ, U.S. Air Forces in Europe, he was selected to attend the National War College at Fort McNair, DC in 1985.

Transferred to the Office of the Secretary of Defense upon graduation in June 1986, he served as Deputy Director and then as Director, Officer and Enlisted Personnel Management. In this position, he was responsible for establishing DOD policy on military personnel promotions, utilization, retention, separation and retirement.

In June 1989, he returned to Headquarters USAF as Chief of the Entitlements Division, assuming responsibility for Air Force policy on all matters involving pay and entitlements, including the military retirement system and survivor benefits, and all legislative matters affecting active and retired military members and families.

He retired from that position on January 1, 1994 to become MOAA's Deputy Director for Government Relations.

In March 2001, he was appointed as MOAA's Director of Government Relations and also was elected Co-Chairman of The Military Coalition, an influential consortium of 33 military and veterans associations.

CAPTAIN MARSHALL HANSON, USNR (RET.), DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE AND MILITARY POLICY, RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Captain Marshall Hanson became the Legislative Director of the Reserve Officers Association on 12 September 2005, 2 years after joining the ROA staff as the Naval Services Director. Not new to Washington, DC, he brings to the ROA team experience and success as the full time Director of Legislation for two other associations, Naval Reserve Association (NRA) and the National Association for Uniformed Services. Marshall brings to the ROA extensive expertise, working with the House and Senate Armed Services Committees, and with Defense Appropriations. He has gone through more than 13 legislative cycles. In 2000, Marshall participated with the Reserve Officers Association in a Roles and Missions study that submitted a white paper to Congress and the Pentagon.

Captain Hanson has testified before the House and Senate Armed Services committees, the Senate Appropriations subcommittee on Defense, the House Veterans Affairs committee and Senate Finance committee, and before the National Reserve Force's Policy Board on Guard and Reserve issues.

He has been chairman of the Navy Marine Corps Council, co-director of the National Military and Veteran's Alliance, and is the chairman for the Guard and Reserve committee in The Military Coalition. In 1999, he moved to Alexandria, VA, from Seattle, WA, to join the NRA staff. Marshall has worked to develop a new adhoc committee, Associations for America's Defense (A4AD), coordinating 12 other associations on national security, force planning, and equipment issues, which were normally not covered by either the coalition or the alliance.

Captain Hanson was born in Darby, PA, and raised in Glen Rock, NJ, and Seattle, WA. A 1972 Graduate of the University of Washington, he was commissioned by the U of W NROTC. He earned an MBA from the University of Washington in 1978, and is a 1990 graduate with distinction of the Naval War College. With a Fleet Support designator, he is a qualified, specialist in strategic operations, analysis, and planning.

CAPT Hanson retired from the Naval Reserve in August 2002. With over 3 years of active duty and 27 years with the Reserves, Hanson's had 7 commands, and has collectively commanded over 200 people. Marshall's seagoing assignments include active duty on USS *Niagara Falls* (AFS-3) as an underway Officer of the Deck (I) and Damage Control Assistant. He has spent additional training periods aboard USS *Kansas City* (AOR-3), USS *Blue Ridge* (LLC-19), JMDS *Isoyuki* (DD-127), and various Canadian Naval Reserve Ships; and he has been the Chief of Staff for a Convoy Commodore, and staff-watch commander at Esquimalt Naval Base in Canada.

Upon retirement, Captain Hanson was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal; he was also awarded the Military Outstanding Volunteer Service Medal in 1997 for community activities in the greater Puget Sound Area. He has twice been awarded the overseas ribbon, and has the Vietnam Campaign Medals and National Defense Service Medal. Prior to his move to Washington, DC, he was a Materials Manager for a Seattle manufacturing company in his civilian career. He and his wife, Deborah, reside in Alexandria, VA, and have two daughters, Loren Louise, age 20 and Sydney Emilia, 14 years.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.
Ms. Moakler?

STATEMENT OF MS. KATHLEEN B. MOAKLER, GOVERNMENT RELATIONS DIRECTOR, NATIONAL MILITARY FAMILY ASSOCIATION

Ms. MOAKLER. Madam Chairman, distinguished committee members, thank you for letting me speak to you today about military families.

Military families are strong, resilient, and resourceful. They know about uncertainty after more than 11 years of war. But there is a new uncertainty, the uncertainty of the programs, resources,

and benefits contributing to their strength and resilience remaining available to support them now and in the future.

Because of sequestration and the 6-month delay in passing a defense appropriations bill, military families now doubt our Nation's leaders' commitment to supporting their service. DOD civilian furloughs will affect military families. Some are military spouses, so while military pay is not affected, for which we are grateful, the overall income of some military families will be impacted. Furloughs and hiring freezes could force family service centers to adjust hours. Smaller staffs will result in longer waits for families needing counseling, financial advice, new parent support, survivor outreach, and victim advocates.

DOD insists they will work to provide school children with a full year of quality education, and ensure each school maintains its accreditation. We are pleased DOD announced late last week there would be no school level furloughs at the end of the current school year. But we know communities are concerned about the beginning of the next school year.

The TRICARE benefit is a rich and appreciated benefit. Military families can sometimes find it difficult to access care, but rarely complain about the quality of care. Access to care is most threatened by the \$3 billion sequestration cut and anticipated furloughs of hospital personnel.

You have heard from the Service Chiefs how sequestration is hurting the readiness of our servicemembers. We have shared some examples in our written statement of how sequestration is negatively affecting military families. We ask Congress to end sequestration now.

With the number of cuts already made, military families are concerned about the elimination of vital resources and programs as part of the next round of savings. What is an acceptable level of support? What should the standard be? Our association believes DOD Instruction 1342.22, Military Family Readiness, must be the unequivocal baseline for military family readiness. It provides appropriate expectations and emphasizes that resource decisions be made based both on the evaluation of military family needs and the effectiveness of those programs.

Programs and services can adapt as needed to respond swiftly to the changing needs during peacetime, war, base closures, natural disaster, and other emergency situations. Currently, this effort at a baseline of support is stymied at all levels by the continued call for belt tightening and capricious budget cuts where these programs are often the first targeted. Military families need to know what to realistically expect about the delivery of support services.

We remain concerned about the transition of wounded, injured, and ill servicemembers and their families. Caregivers are an important part of the servicemember's recovery. VA and DOD caregiver benefits do not mesh, and many caregivers lose the support just when they need it the most.

We ask you to create a smoother transition for caregivers between DOD and VA caregiver benefits. Now is the time to end the dependency and indemnity compensation offset to the survivor benefit plan. Although we know there is a significant price tag associ-

ated with this change, ending this offset would correct an inequity that has existed for many years for our survivors.

We appreciate the action being taken to address the rising number of suicides by servicemembers. We are concerned that military and veteran families were not included when examining suicides. We recommend Congress require a DOD report on the number of family members who commit suicide, made a suicide attempt, or reported suicidal thoughts.

We want to ensure family support programs are authorized, funded, and implemented at the level needed to maintain the readiness of servicemembers and their families, and to allow them to meet the challenges of the military lifestyle. Military families should be able to access support no matter where they live.

We believe the people the servicemember identifies as family should have the information and help they need within the law and DOD regulations to support the readiness of the servicemember.

Thank you, and I await any questions you may have.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Barnes?

STATEMENT OF MASTER CHIEF JOSEPH L. BARNES, USN, RETIRED, NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION

Chief BARNES. Madam Chairman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I will be addressing priority active duty and retiree issues.

Military service is unlike any other career or occupation, and less than 1 percent of our population is shouldering 100 percent of the responsibility for our national security. Ensuring adequate pay and benefits for our Active, Guard, and Reserve personnel, their families and survivors, and fulfilling commitments to provide health care and other benefits for military retirees, must be top priorities.

Thanks to support from this subcommittee, there have been major pay and benefit improvements enacted since 2000. There has been much attention to these and the associated costs during the ongoing sequestration related budget crisis. However, there is usually no mention of the 13.5 percent pay gap at that time, plus major recruiting and retention challenges, concerns about a hollow force, and the government's failure to honor commitments to those who served in the past.

Defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) during war time is now much lower than during past conflicts. According to the Wall Street Journal, projected defense spending will shrink from more than 4 percent today to 2.7 percent of GDP by 2021, a level last seen before Pearl Harbor. The coalition strongly supports a full 1.8 percent ECI active duty pay increase for 2014. Pay comparability is directly related to long-term readiness.

There is concern in the active duty community regarding the so-called reform of pay and retirement benefits by the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission. The powerful pull of the 20-year retirement system is the main reason retention levels have not imploded as a result of unprecedented wartime strain on troops and their families. Despite extraordinary demands,

men and women in uniform are still answering the call, but at the cost of ever greater personal sacrifices.

Budget driven retirement benefit cuts enacted in 1986 affected only future retirees and eventually resulted in the repeal of the plan in 1999 due to concerns about retention and readiness. Adequate end strengths are also essential to military readiness.

Significant threats to national security continue despite the winding down of operations in Afghanistan, and ensuring sufficient dwell time between deployments remains an elusive goal. Navy deployments, for example, have increased from 6 to as long as 9 months, and the stress on repeatedly deployed servicemembers and their families continues.

No Federal obligation is more important than protecting national security, and the most important element of national security is sustaining a dedicated, top quality, All-Volunteer Force.

Thank you again for the opportunity to present our views on these issues.

[The prepared statement of the Fleet Reserve Association follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION

THE FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) is the oldest and largest enlisted organization serving Active Duty, Reserves, retired and veterans of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. It is Congressionally Chartered, recognized by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) as an accrediting Veteran Service Organization for claim representation and entrusted to serve all veterans who seek its help. In 2007, FRA was selected for full membership on the National Veterans' Day Committee.

FRA was established in 1924 and its name is derived from the Navy's program for personnel transferring to the Fleet Reserve or Fleet Marine Corps Reserve after 20 or more years of active duty, but less than 30 years for retirement purposes. During the required period of service in the Fleet Reserve, assigned personnel earn retainer pay and are subject to recall by the Navy.

FRA's mission is to act as the premier "watch dog" organization in maintaining and improving the quality of life for Sea Service personnel and their families. FRA is a leading advocate on Capitol Hill for enlisted Active Duty, Reserve, retired and veterans of the Sea Services. The Association also sponsors a National Americanism Essay Program and other recognition and relief programs. In addition, the FRA Education Foundation oversees the Association's scholarship program that presents awards totaling over \$125,000 to deserving students each year.

The Association is a founding member of The Military Coalition (TMC), a 34-member consortium of military and veteran's organizations. FRA hosts most TMC meetings and members of its staff serve in a number of TMC leadership roles.

FRA celebrated 88 years of service in November 2012. For over 8 decades, dedication to its members has resulted in legislation enhancing quality of life programs for Sea Services personnel, other members of the uniformed services plus their families and survivors, while protecting their rights and privileges. CHAMPUS, (now TRICARE Standard) was an initiative of FRA, as was the Uniformed Services Survivor Benefit Plan. More recently, FRA led the way in reforming the REDUX Retirement Plan, obtaining targeted pay increases for mid-level enlisted personnel, and sea pay for junior enlisted sailors. FRA also played a leading role in advocating recently enacted predatory lending protections and absentee voting reform for servicemembers and their dependents.

FRA's motto is: "Loyalty, Protection, and Service."

CERTIFICATION OF NON-RECEIPT OF FEDERAL FUNDS

Pursuant to the requirements of House Rule XI, the Fleet Reserve Association has not received any Federal grant or contract during the current fiscal year or either of the 2 previous fiscal years.

SYNOPSIS

The Fleet Reserve Association (FRA) is an active participant and leading organization in The Military Coalition (TMC) and strongly supports the recommendations addressed in the more extensive TMC testimony prepared for this hearing. The intent of this statement is to address other issues of particular importance to FRA's membership and the Sea Services enlisted communities.

The following Letter to the Editor of The Washington Post dated December 7, 2012 summarizes the concerns of our members and others in the Uniformed Services community regarding proposals to drastically increase health care fees, cut pay and retirement benefits and other personnel programs in conjunction with the Defense Budget reductions.

Regarding the December 3rd editorial "Time to Rein In Tricare."

Personnel expenditures are directly associated with defense readiness and renegeing on past commitments by imposing drastic health care fee hikes on military retirees will negatively impact recruiting and retention. Threats to also cut retirement benefits and other quality-of-life programs are major concerns within the Active and Reserve military communities and are viewed as devaluing military service.

The debt crisis is serious, but total defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product is significantly below past wartime periods and is projected to go lower. Despite claims of rising health care costs, in recent years the Defense Department has asked to shift unspent Defense Health Program funds to other areas.

Military retirees who are younger than 65 and are enrolled in TRICARE Prime experienced a 13-percent increase in their annual enrollment fees last year, and these fees will increase annually based on inflation. Pharmacy copays will also increase in 2013.

Military service is unlike any other occupation. Roughly 1 percent of the population has volunteered to shoulder 100 percent of the responsibility for our national security. The benefits associated with this service have been earned through 20 or more years of arduous military service.

JOSEPH L. BARNES,
National Executive Director,
Fleet Reserve Association.

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand and Ranking Member Graham, FRA salutes you, other members of the subcommittee, and your staff for the strong and unwavering support of programs essential to Active Duty, Reserve component, and retired members of the armed services, their families, and survivors. The subcommittee's work has greatly enhanced care and support for our wounded warriors and significantly improved military pay, and other benefits and enhanced other personnel, retirement and survivor programs. This support is critical in maintaining readiness and is invaluable to military personnel engaged in operational commitments throughout the world and in fulfilling commitments to those who've served in the past.

SEQUESTRATION, CR, AND DOD BUDGET

There's uncertainty and growing anxiety within the Active Duty, Reserve, and retiree communities regarding the effects of sequestration and major concerns about delayed approval of the fiscal year 2013 spending package halfway through the current fiscal year and the administration's fiscal year 2014 budget request. This is reflected in responses to FRA's February 2013 online survey indicating that 90 percent of retirees were "very concerned" about the situation—the highest rating. FRA urges the administration and Congress to work together to ensure sufficient funding for fiscal year 2014 and beyond. Former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta stated that sequestration cuts "would do catastrophic damage to our military, hollowing out the force and degrading its ability to protect the country." It is significant that defense spending totals 17 percent of the Federal budget, yet 50 percent of the sequestration cuts are targeted for the Department of Defense (DOD). Operations are winding down in Afghanistan, however, the Nation is still at war and slashing DOD's budget further will not reduce the associated threats.

FRA supports the "Down Payment to Protect National Security Act" (S. 263), sponsored by Senator Kelly Ayotte (NH) and its House companion bill (H.R. 593) sponsored by House Armed Services Committee Chairman Representative Howard "Buck" McKeon, (CA) that would amend the Budget Control Act (BCA) by excluding the DOD budget from the next round of sequestration cuts mandated by the BCA.

FRA supports a defense budget of at least 5 percent of gross domestic product that will adequately fund both people and weapons programs, and is concerned that the administration's spending plan is not enough to sufficiently support both.

COST-OF-LIVING ADJUSTMENTS

The administration's fiscal year 2014 budget request includes a plan to calculate future cost-of-living adjustments (COLAs) for inflation adjusted benefits by using the chained Consumer Price Index (CPI) in lieu of the current CPI. The so-called "chained CPI" takes into account the effect of substitutions consumers make in response to changes in prices. FRA believes that change over time would have a significant cumulative impact on the annual COLAs for military retirees and personnel receiving veterans' benefits.

In addition, under current law, military retired pay is rounded down to the next lowest dollar. For many enlisted retirees, their retired pay is sometimes the sole source of income for them and their dependents. Over time, the effect of rounding down can be substantial for these personnel and FRA supports a policy change to rounding up retiree COLAs to the next highest dollar.

"MODERNIZATION" COMMISSION

The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013 (H.R. 4310, P.L. 112-239) establishes the Military Compensation and Retirement Modernization Commission but limits its recommendations from being BRAC-like in conjunction with its review and "reform" of the current compensation and military retirement system. FRA believes it's important that this distinguished Subcommittee and its House counterpart along with the full Armed Services Committees maintain oversight over commission recommendations. Numerous studies and commissions (10 since the beginning of 2006) have focused on military retirement and other benefits as an opportunity to reduce overhead costs for the Pentagon.

In 1986, Congress passed, over the objection of then Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, major retirement changes known as "Redux" that significantly reduced retirement benefits for those joining the military after 1986. FRA led efforts to repeal the act in 1999 after the military experienced retention and recruitment problems and the Association continues to monitor the take rate for personnel choosing between remaining on the High 3 program, or the Redux program at 15 years of service.

Maintaining a highly-motivated, well-trained, and professional all-volunteer career military force requires an adequate pay and benefit package. Military service is unlike any other career or occupation, and requires adequate compensation and a unique retirement system. Career senior noncommissioned officers are the backbone of our military and their leadership and guidance are invaluable and a result of specialized years of training and experience.

TRICARE BENEFITS AND FEE INCREASES

FRA's membership appreciates the following Sense of Congress provisions in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013: (1) DOD and the Nation have a committed health benefit obligation to retired military personnel that exceeds the obligation of corporate employers to civilian employees; (2) DOD has many additional options to constrain the growth of health care spending in ways that do not disadvantage beneficiaries; and (3) DOD should first pursue all options rather than seeking large fee increases or marginalize the benefit for beneficiaries.

Health care dominated priorities for military retirees responding to FRA's 2013 online survey, with quality of health care benefits rated as "very important" by over 95 percent of respondents. Access to the benefit followed in importance as indicated by over 94 percent of those participating in the survey.

On October 1, 2013 DOD will reduce TRICARE Prime Service Areas, a change that will affect more than 170,000 retirees and their qualified family members and require enrollment in TRICARE Standard. Our members are voicing serious concerns about this change due to the higher costs associated with TRICARE Standard.

FRA understands that under the new TRICARE contracts access to TRICARE Prime is limited to within 40 miles of a Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) and in areas affected by the 2005 base closure and realignment process. FRA believes current TRICARE Prime beneficiaries that live outside the TRICARE Prime Service Area (PSA) should be allowed to continue to have access to TRICARE Prime coverage (grandfathered) until they relocate or change their current primary care provider.

Beyond the Military Health System (MHS) transitioning to a more integrated delivery model that will leverage a shared service approach to common functions, FRA

believes that DOD must sufficiently investigate and implement other options to make TRICARE more cost-efficient as alternatives to shifting costs to TRICARE beneficiaries.

WOUNDED WARRIORS AND SEAMLESS TRANSITION

FRA strongly supports the administration's efforts to create an integrated Electronic Health Record (iEHR) for every servicemember which would be a major step towards the Association's longstanding goal of a truly seamless transition from military to veteran status for all servicemembers and permit DOD, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and private health care providers immediate access to a veteran's health data.

The importance of fully implemented interoperability of electronic medical records cannot be overstated. However, former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta and Secretary of the VA Eric Shinseki recently announced jointly that the departments are abandoning plans to create a single electronic health record for active duty military and veterans. FRA and others view this as a step backwards on this issue apparently due to budget pressures and higher costs. There is some sharing now between DOD, VA, and the private sector, however, wider expansion of data sharing and exchange agreements between VA, DOD, and the private sector is needed.

FRA strongly supports the VA/DOD joint effort to invest more than \$100 million in new research to improve diagnosis and treatment of post traumatic stress (PTS) and mild traumatic brain injury (TBI) in response to a August 31, 2012 Presidential Executive order calling for DOD and VA to also establish an interagency task force to coordinate their efforts, and VA and Health and Human Services will establish at least 15 pilot programs involving community-based health providers to expand mental health services in areas not well served by VA. DOD and VA should work together to standardize training for all DOD/VA mental health care providers.

The Armed Services and Veterans Affairs Committees must remain vigilant regarding their oversight responsibilities associated with ensuring a "seamless transition" for our Nation's wounded warriors. In conjunction with this, FRA is concerned about shifting of departmental oversight from the Senior Oversight Committee (SOC) comprised of the DOD and VA secretaries per provisions of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2009, to the lower echelon Joint Executive Council which is now responsible for supervision, and coordination of all aspects of DOD and VA wounded warrior programs. This change is perceived by many as diminishing the importance of addressing significant challenges faced by servicemembers—particularly wounded warriors and their families—in transitioning from DOD to the VA.

The Association notes the importance of the e-Benefits web site which serves as an electronic portal for servicemembers, veterans, and their families to research, find, access, and in the near future manage their VA benefits and track progress on claims processing. The program is a service of the DOD and VA and was one of the recommendations of the President's Commission on Care for America's Returning Wounded Warriors (Dole/Shalala). There are now more than 1.86 million e-Benefits users.

FRA recommends support for the "Servicemembers Mental Health Review Act" (S. 628), sponsored by Senator Jon Tester (MT) and its House companion bill (H.R. 975) sponsored by Representative Tim Walz (MN). The bills would authorize the Physical Disability Board of Review to review and, when necessary, correct service records for veterans diagnosed by DOD with a Personality Disorder (PD) or Adjustment Disorder (AD) and discharged after active duty deployment. Many of these brave veterans have seen combat and may actually be suffering from Post-Traumatic Stress (PTS). Because PD and AD are considered pre-existing conditions, the DOD is not obligated to award the benefits they earned that may help them properly reintegrate into their communities.

The Association also supports the "Ruth Moore Act" (S. 294/H.R. 671) sponsored by Senator Jon Tester (MT) and Representative Chellie Pingree (ME) respectively that will improve the disability compensation evaluation procedure at the VA for veterans with mental health conditions related to military sexual trauma.

FRA believes post traumatic stress should not be referred to as a "disorder." This terminology adds to the stigma of this condition, and it is critical that the military do all it can to reduce the stigma associated with PTS and TBI. The DOD disability evaluation should be required to include all unfitting conditions and DOD physical evaluation boards should be mandated to standardize disability ratings between the Service branches. The Association also strongly encourages support for the Navy's Safe Harbor Program and the Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, programs that are providing invaluable support for these personnel before and after they transition to veterans' status.

MILITARY SUICIDES UP IN 2012

Data from DOD on military suicides in 2012 indicates an increase of 16 percent over 2011. Total active duty suicides for 2012 were 349, up from 301 suicides in 2011. During a March 21, 2013 hearing, Jacqueline Garrick, acting director of the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, told the House Armed Services Military Personnel Subcommittee that servicemember suicide rate had increased from 10.3 suicides per 100,000 in 2001 to 18.3 suicides per 100,000 in 2010. She compared the military data from 2001 and 2010 to the U.S. suicide rate for males, ages 17 to 60—an age demographic that she claimed best matches the armed forces demographic. This data reveals that the 2001 comparable civilian suicide rate was 21.8 suicides per 100,000 and 25.1 per 100,000 in 2010. Military suicides by comparison are increasing at a dramatically higher rate (77 percent for military vice 15 percent for comparable civilian population) or five times higher than the civilian rate.

The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 (H.R. 4310, P.L. 112-239) includes a Senate floor amendment sponsored by Senator Patty Murray (WA) that requires DOD to implement a standardize and comprehensive suicide prevention program. The provision was in response to a Rand Corporation study that indicated that there are serious gaps and a lack of consistency in military suicide prevention programs. Further, a Presidential Executive Order was issued in September 2012 that mandates the VA and DOD to establish an interagency task force to coordinate suicide prevention efforts. FRA notes that the VA/DOD crisis hot line has assisted more than 640,000 people and stopped over 23,000 potential suicides, and believes there must be readily available counseling support and expanded awareness of help that's available to servicemembers and veterans in crisis. Expanding VA counseling to veteran's family members, strengthening oversight of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System, and requiring VA to establish accurate measures for mental health are also important and addressed in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013. FRA believes challenges and stress associated with marital problems and divorce should be considered in addressing suicide prevention which is a high priority for FRA and the Association welcomes and supports the initiatives listed above.

UNIFORMED SERVICES FORMER SPOUSES PROTECTION ACT

According to Military.com writer Amy Bushatz, "The military divorce rate went down slightly in 2012, settling at 3.5 percent from the record high 3.7 percent in 2011. Military officials and divorce experts are hopeful that the overall rate, which had crept slowly up from 2.6 percent in 2001 to 3.7 percent in 2011, is starting to move downward." Female enlisted soldiers and marines, however, continue to experience the highest rate of divorce—9.4 percent and 9.3 percent respectively. In the Army, the female enlisted divorce rate is more than triple that of enlisted males."

Related to these statistics, FRA urges Congress to review the Uniformed Services Former Spouses Protection Act (USFSPA) with the intent to amend the language so that the Federal Government is required to protect its servicemembers against State courts that ignore the act.

The USFSPA was enacted 30 years ago; the result of congressional maneuvering that denied the opposition an opportunity to express its position in open public hearings. The last hearing, in 1999, was conducted by the House Veterans' Affairs Committee rather than the House Armed Services Committee which has oversight authority for USFSPA.

Few provisions of the USFSPA protect the rights of the servicemember, and none are enforceable by the Department of Justice or DOD. If a State court violates the right of the servicemember under the provisions of USFSPA, the Solicitor General will make no move to reverse the error. Why? Because the act fails to have the enforceable language required for Justice or the Defense Department to react. The only recourse is for the servicemember to appeal to the court, which in many cases gives that court jurisdiction over the member. Another infraction is committed by some State courts awarding a percentage of veterans' compensation to ex-spouses, a clear violation of U.S. law; yet, the Federal Government does nothing to stop this transgression.

There are other provisions that weigh heavily in favor of former spouses. For example, when a divorce is granted and the former spouse is awarded a percentage of the servicemember's retired pay, the amount should be based on the member's pay grade at the time of the divorce and not at a higher grade that may be held upon retirement.

FRA believes that the Pentagon's USFSPA study recommendations are a good starting point for reform. This study includes improvements for both former spouse and the servicemember.

ACTIVE DUTY/RESERVE PAY

FRA strongly supports a 2014 full Employment Cost Index military pay increase of 1.8 percent. The Rand Corporation released a study last year recommending smaller military pay increases starting in fiscal year 2015. The study indicates that military pay increased faster than civilian pay since 2000, but ignores the fact that military pay increases lagged behind civilian pay during the 1990s resulting in a 1999 pay gap of 13.5 percent, which contributed to major recruitment and retention problems. The study suggests that smaller pay increases will not significantly impact retention and recruitment due to the relatively high unemployment rate through out the economy. FRA disagrees and believes the current high rate of unemployment will not continue indefinitely, and that pay for the all-volunteer military should accurately reflect service and the sacrifices borne by those who serve and their families. As Alex Keenan wrote in *Navy Times* (03-11-13), "The plain truth is that if we want the best, most-highly trained, most capable military in recorded history, we have to be collectively willing to pay the monetary price—not only because it benefits our own national security, but because the people wearing the uniform are willing to pay an even higher price if called upon."

END STRENGTH

Adequate military end strength is vital in sustaining our national security, and FRA is concerned about budget-driven calls for reducing end strength. After years of reducing its end strength through involuntary separations and other initiatives, the Navy has now admitted it has cut too much. As of December 6, 2012 Navy end strength was 317,600 which is the lowest end strength since 1940.

The strain and inadequate dwell time of repeated deployments is significant and related to end strength levels. This is reflected in troubling stress-related statistics that include alarming suicide rates, prescription drug abuse, alcohol use and military divorce rates.

CONCURRENT RECEIPT

FRA continues its advocacy for legislation authorizing the immediate payment of concurrent receipt of full military retired pay and veterans' disability compensation for all disabled retirees. The Association appreciates the progress that has been made on this issue that includes a recently enacted provision fixing the Combat Related Special Compensation (CRSC) glitch that caused some beneficiaries to lose compensation when their disability rating was increased. There still remain Chapter 61 retirees receiving Concurrent Retirement and Disability Pay (CRDP) and CRDP retirees with 20 or more years of service with less than 50 percent disability rating that should receive full military retired pay and VA disability compensation without any offset.

The Association strongly supports pending legislation to authorize additional improvements that include Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid's legislation (S.234), Representative Sanford Bishop's "Disabled Veterans Tax Termination Act" (H.R. 333) and Representative Gus Bilirakis' "Retired Pay Restoration Act" (H.R. 303).

RESERVE COMPONENT ISSUES

FRA stands foursquare in support of the Nation's reservists and to improved compensation and benefits packages to attract recruits and retain currently serving personnel. These changes should include eliminating the fiscal year early retirement limitation which is addressed in the "Reserve Retirement Deployment Credit Correction Act" (S. 240) sponsored by Senator Jon Tester (MT) and its House companion bill (H.R.690), sponsored by Representative Tom Latham (IA).

FRA also supports making early retirement credit retroactive to September 11, 2001, after which the Reserve component changed from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve that's vital in prosecuting the war efforts and other operational commitments.

FRA supports the "Healthcare for Early Retirement Eligible Reservists Act" (H.R. 738), sponsored by HASC Personnel Subcommittee Chairman Representative Joe Wilson (SC), that would allow retirees of the Reserve Component to receive medical and dental care at military treatment facilities (MTF) or VA facilities prior to reaching age 60. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2009 granted qualifying reservists early retirement, but did not authorize healthcare benefits. In addition reservists in the Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) have no access to health care.

The Association also supports restoring the Reserve Montgomery GI Bill benefits to at least 47 percent of active duty MGIB benefits. Further FRA recommends funding of a tailored Transition Assistance Program (TAP) to meet the unique needs of

reservists, including academic protections for mobilized reservists students such as refund guarantees, exemption from repayment of Federal student loans during activation, and maintaining academic standing.

SBP/DIC OFFSET REPEAL

FRA supports the “Military Surviving Equity Act” (H.R. 32) sponsored by Representative Joe Wilson (SC) to eliminate the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)/Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset for widows and widowers of servicemembers. This bill would eliminate the offset, also known as the “widow’s tax,” on approximately 60,000 widows and widowers of our Armed Forces.

SBP and DIC payments are paid for different reasons. SBP is purchased by the retiree and is intended to provide a portion of retired pay to the survivor. DIC is a special indemnity compensation paid to the survivor when a member’s service causes his or her premature death. In such cases, the VA indemnity compensation should be added to the SBP the retiree paid for, not substituted for it. It should be noted as a matter of equity that surviving spouses of Federal civilian retirees who are disabled veterans and die of military-service-connected causes can receive DIC without losing any of their Federal civilian SBP benefits.

RETENTION OF FINAL FULL MONTH’S RETIRED PAY

FRA urges the subcommittee to authorize the retention of the full final month’s retired pay by the surviving spouse (or other designated survivor) of a military retiree for the month in which the member was alive for at least 24 hours. FRA strongly supports “The Military Retiree Survivor Comfort Act” (H.R. 1360), introduced by Representative Walter Jones (NC) that achieves this goal.

Current regulations require survivors of deceased military retirees to return any retirement payment received in the month the retiree passes away or any subsequent month thereafter. Upon the demise of a retired servicemember in receipt of military retired pay, the surviving spouse is to notify DOD of the death. The Department’s financial arm then stops payment on the retirement account, recalculates the final payment to cover only the days in the month the retiree was alive, forwards a check for those days to the surviving spouse (beneficiary) and, if not reported in a timely manner, recoups any payment(s) made covering periods subsequent to the retiree’s death. The recouping is made without consideration of the survivor’s financial status.

The measure is related to a similar pay policy enacted by the VA. Congress passed a law in 1996 that allows a surviving spouse to retain the veteran’s disability and VA pension payments issued for the month of the veteran’s death. FRA believes military retired pay should be no different.

IMPROVEMENTS FOR MILITARY PREDATORY LENDING LAW

FRA thanks this subcommittee for improvements in the Military Lending Act (MLA) specified in the Senate version (S. 3254) of the fiscal year 2013 Defense Authorization bill. This provision provides an explicit private right of action and civil penalties for predatory lenders, and expands oversight and enforcement authority to the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) and the Federal Trade Commission. Unfortunately, other related amendments to close loopholes in the definitions of payday and car title loans in the Senate version of the NDAA were not included in the final bill.

The NDAA also called on DOD to conduct a study during 2013 to identify harmful credit products and practices and recommend protections to close loopholes. DOD is also required to promulgate a regulation in 2013 to implement changes in the law. FRA, CFPB, and consumer groups recently meet with DOD officials on this issue and have asked the Department to include payday and car title loan definitions in the regulation and also clarify that nonresident military borrowers are protected by all State credit laws. FRA urges continued oversight by this subcommittee to ensure that the report is timely and accurate.

PROTECT THE COMMISSARY AND EXCHANGE SYSTEMS

Military commissaries and exchanges are essential parts of the military benefit package and FRA’s online survey completed in February 2013 indicates that nearly 61 percent of retirees rated Commissary/Exchange privileges as “very important.” FRA is a member of the recently established coalition to Save Our Military Shopping Benefits. The coalition now has 13 member organizations representing 1.5 million servicemembers, veterans, and their families, many of which are authorized patrons of the resale system.

A new study by the Resale and MWR Center for Research entitled “Costs and Benefits of the DOD Resale System” indicates that these programs provide military members, retirees and their families with shopping discounts worth \$4.5 billion annually. These stores are the biggest employers of military family members with 50,000 spouses, dependent children, retirees and veterans on the payrolls, adding \$884 million a year to military household incomes. The Association notes with concern DOD’s plans to soon issue furlough notices to the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) employees and close commissaries on Mondays for the remainder of the fiscal year due to sequestration related cuts to operating accounts of 9.2 percent.

The report also indicates that approximately \$545 million a year from store operations is reinvested in base infrastructure. This is from profits of military exchanges and from a 5-percent surcharge collected at cash registers in commissaries. These facilities and capital improvements become assets on the balance sheet of the Federal Government. Exchange profits also fund important base morale, welfare, and recreation programs (MWR) that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for military beneficiaries.

CHILD CARE AND FAMILY HOUSING

Access to affordable, quality child care must be a high priority for all the military services. Adequate and reliable child care helps reduce stress on a military family—especially when one of the parents is deployed. Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy Michael Stevens’ March 19, 2013 statement to the House Military Construction and Veterans Affairs Appropriations Subcommittee state that Navy Child Development Centers (CDC) provide quality care that is affordable when compared to commercial programs that charge based on age (children age three and under the most expensive and typically most junior enlisted have younger children); whereas Navy fees are based on total family income. Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps Micheal Barrett also testified before the subcommittee indicating that the Marine Corps is scheduled to increase CDC spaces in fiscal year 2013–2014. The Navy completed its CDC multi-year expansion efforts last year that added 7,000 new child care spaces to meet the Office of Secretary of Defense guidance to provide 80 percent of potential child care needs. This expansion reduced waiting times to 3 months or less. The impact of sequestration on CDCs is unclear. Some centers are staffed by non-appropriated fund (NAF) workers who will not be affected by furloughs. Others are staffed by civilian government employees and some by a combination of both. Centers staffed by DOD civilians will be impacted by furloughs.

Regarding military housing, the Marines have more than 24,000 homes and 96 percent are privatized (PPV). The Marine Corps reports that PPVs improve family housing, community centers, and playgrounds creating more of a sense of community. The Navy has privatized 97 percent of its homes in CONUS and Hawaii. The Navy will begin construction of new housing at the Naval Base Coronado, CA, for 468 E-1 through E-4 sailors. The Navy is working to reduce inadequate housing from 37 percent currently, to 10 percent by fiscal year 2019.

FRA believes there is also a need to reform enlisted housing standards by allowing E-7s and above to reside in separate homes, track the Basic Allowance for Housing to ensure it is commensurate with actual housing costs, ensure adequate housing inventory and that housing privatization programs are beneficial to servicemembers and their families.

CONCLUSION

FRA is grateful for the opportunity to provide these recommendations to this distinguished subcommittee.

MASTER CHIEF JOSEPH L. BARNES, USN (RET.), NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
FLEET RESERVE ASSOCIATION

Joseph L. (Joe) Barnes is a retired Navy Master Chief and serves as the Fleet Reserve Association’s (FRA) National Executive Director. He is a member of FRA’s National Board of Directors, chairs the Association’s National Committee on Legislative Service, and is responsible for managing the organization’s National Headquarters in Alexandria, VA. In addition, he is president of the FRA Education Foundation which oversees the Association’s scholarship program that presented awards totaling \$128,000 in 2012.

Barnes joined FRA’s National Headquarters team in 1993 and prior to assuming his current position in 2002, he served as FRA’s Director of Legislative Programs. During his tenure, the Association realized significant legislative gains, and was rec-

ognized with a certificate award for excellence in government relations from the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE).

In addition to his FRA duties, Barnes is Co-Chairman of the Military Coalition and co-chairs the Coalition's Personnel, Compensation and Commissaries Committee. He is also a member of the Defense Commissary Agency's Patron Council and an ex-officio member of the U.S. Navy Memorial Foundation's Board of Directors.

He received the U.S. Coast Guard's Meritorious Public Service Award and was appointed an Honorary Member of the U.S. Coast Guard in 2003.

While on active duty, he was the public affairs director for the U.S. Navy Band in Washington, DC, and directed marketing and promotional efforts for national tours, network radio and television appearances, and major special events in the Nation's capital. His awards include the Defense Meritorious Service and Navy Commendation Medals.

Barnes holds a bachelor's degree in education and a master's degree in public relations management from The American University, Washington, DC. He earned the Certified Association Executive designation from ASAE in 2003 and is an accredited member of the International Association of Business Communicators.

STATEMENT OF CAPT MARSHALL HANSON, USN, RETIRED, DIRECTOR, LEGISLATIVE AND MILITARY POLICY, RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

Captain HANSON. Madam Chairman, members of the subcommittee, I am Marshall Hanson. In addition to my job at the ROA, I am a co-chair for the TMC's Guard and Reserve Committee.

Amid the news reports about Monday's bombing in Boston, there was a video clip of two people in uniform helping clear debris. Whether they were active or Reserve component, these brave individuals exemplify a military that runs towards chaos.

During the last 11 years of war, almost 875,000 Reserve and Guard members were called to active duty. Of these, 1,225 died in the line of duty. Despite such sacrifices, there remains a number of benefit parity issues that need to be fixed by legislation.

While TMC thanks this committee for allowing Reserve component members to earn early retirement, many do not receive the full retirement credit that they deserve. A fiscal year barrier exists, denying them a 90-day credit if their service crosses between 2 fiscal years. TMC supports S. 240 by Senators Tester, Chambliss, and Blumenthal to fix the problem in U.S. Code. TMC also advocates extending the early retirement to the warriors who served since September 11, 2001. Just yesterday, I learned of a female colonel who was affected by both aspects of the law. She served 16 months in theater, won a Bronze Star, but only got 9 months' credit towards earlier retirement.

A need exists to modernize the Reserve retirement system to incentivize service beyond 20 years. This has been declining over the last 11 years of war. As many senior officers and enlisted are performing duty without pay, TMC endorses crediting all inactive duty toward Reserve retirement. Also, if an officer or enlisted retiree is recalled, his or her retirement should be recalculated after 1 year of mobilization as it is allowed now for general offices.

Documenting active duty should be reexamined. Many Reserve and Guard members do not qualify for veteran status because their active duty periods are not long enough. Rather than collect a pile of DD-214s at the end of one's career, it makes sense to have a single document upon separation from the Reserve component that ac-

cumulates that all duty performed and lists specialty codes and awards.

The title 10 Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) allowance for selective reservists is woefully inadequate, being only 11.5 percent of what is paid in the post-9/11 GI Bill. The new GI Bill pays up to \$2,800 per month while the Montgomery GI Bill for selected Reserve pays only \$356 per month for full time study. As one reservist said, "This barely pays for gas and parking."

TMC asks the committee to work with the Senate Veterans Affairs to restore the selected Reserve allowance to the historic benchmark of 47 percent of the Active Duty MGIB, and to also integrate it into title 38 so there is no longer an orphan GI Bill under title 10.

While the TAP is being revised and improved, the Reserve and Guard members will not benefit. The active duty is hesitant to allow Reserve component members to linger on active duty so they can participate in TAP. After a long period of Active Duty, Reserve, and Guard members are anxious to get home.

There is a need to explore an outside of the gate version of TAP so that RC members can get the materials without being at an active duty base. Integrating this with the Yellow Ribbon Program is an option, but one that requires funding as we cannot ask our returning Guard and Reserve members to be debriefed without pay.

Reserve health care also needs some continuity tweaking. Those who participate in TRICARE Reserve Select love the program, but the ROA joins other groups in not supporting suggested TRICARE fee increases because it will have a possible impact on the cost of TRICARE Reserve Select.

Regrettably, the transitions between different military health care programs are not seamless. Serving members need to re-enroll at various points as they transition on and off of active duty. It is even worse for those who have kept their civilian employer's medical plan.

TMC thanks this committee for the added 18 months' TRICARE Reserve Select transition when one leaves the Selected Reserve. But the current TRICARE retired Reserve program is inadequate because of its high premium levels.

ROA, like other associations, looks forward to working with the committee on these and other issues that were highlighted in written testimony. I thank you, and I await your questions.

[The prepared statement of the Reserve Officers Association follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE RESERVE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES AND THE RESERVE ENLISTED ASSOCIATION

INTRODUCTION

On behalf of our members, the Reserve Officers Association and the Reserve Enlisted Association thank the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony on personnel issues affecting serving Active and Reserve members, retirees, their families, and survivors, as well as civilian personnel.

The Federal Reserve and the National Guard are integral contributors to our Nation's operational ability to defend itself, assist other countries in maintaining global peace, and fight against overseas threats. They are an integrated part of the Total Force, yet remain a surge capability as well. A recent study by the Reserve Forces Policy Board has found that a Reserve component member costs the Department of

Defense (DOD) 31 percent of the cost of his or her Active Duty counterpart over the life cycle of the warrior.

At a time when the Pentagon and Congress are examining our Nation's security, it would be incorrect to discount the Reserve components' abilities and cost efficiencies. Instead, these part-time warriors provide a cost savings solution and an area to retain competencies for missions not directly embodied in the administration's strategic policy, Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for a 21st Century Defense.

ROA and REA are concerned that as the Pentagon strives to achieve the administration's goals for this new strategic policy, it is not seriously considering the available assets and cost efficiencies of the Reserve component, and that it instead views the Reserve and National Guard as a bill payer. Congress, starting with the leadership of this subcommittee, should insist on a methodical analysis of suggested reductions in missions and bases before authorizing such changes.

PROVIDE AND EXECUTE AN ADEQUATE NATIONAL SECURITY

The Reserve Officers Association is chartered by Congress "to support and promote the development and execution of a military policy for the United States that will provide adequate national security." The nation must have adequate military force structure, training, and equipment to defeat any known or emerging military force that could be used against us.

Requested Action

- Hold congressional hearings on the budget implications of the policy "Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21st Century Defense."
- Reconcile the budget in order to end the Defense Sequestration budget cuts.
- Study the impact of manpower cuts to Army and Marine Corps on national Security.
- Avoid parity cuts of both Active and Reserve components without analyzing rebalance.
- Maintain a robust and versatile All-Volunteer Armed Forces that can accomplish its mission to defend the homeland and U.S. national security interests overseas.

The proposed Defense budget by the administration builds upon a DOD reform agenda that it began several years ago. In 2010, Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates outlined an efficiencies initiative designed to save the Department \$100 billion over the next 5 years. In 2012, Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta announced that DOD was on the path to cut \$487 billion from expenses over the next 10 years as mandated by the Budget Control Act of 2011. DOD's fiscal year 2013 budget request included an additional \$60 billion in cuts between 2013 and 2017.

The original initiative by former Secretary Gates as stated in the fiscal year 2012 defense budget was to identify \$178 billion in efficiency savings in order to reinvest \$100 billion in high-priority programs. Yet the reinvestment strategy has gone by the wayside, with the focus simply on reducing the defense dollars.

For fiscal year 2014, a savings of approximately \$34 billion have been identified by the administration to be reprogrammed for better use across the "Future Years Defense Plan. Many of these efficiencies "mimic the fiscal year 2013 requests" which Congress rejected last year.

ROA and REA question the current spending priorities that place more importance on the immediate future, rather than first doing a short- and long-term threat analysis. The result of such a budget-centric policy could again lead to a hollow force whose readiness and effectiveness is degraded.

In its statement about priorities and choices, the administration talked about "reducing overhead costs within the military service and across the defense enterprise—by an estimated \$200 billion between fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2017—as a result of paring back excess staff [and] headquarters."

The administration proposes to cut defense "civilian personnel of about 5 percent between fiscal year 2012 and 2018," but warns that "about half of these reductions depend on infrastructure consolidation, restructuring of military treatment facilities, and forecasted reductions in demand for depot maintenance as we come out of Afghanistan."

BASE CLOSURE OR DEFENSE REALIGNMENT?

The President's budget continues to ask for more rounds of base closures. REA and ROA don't support such a BRAC recommendation. In the 2005 BRAC, Reserve

and National Guard facilities were closed, reducing the risk of closure of active duty facilities.

- (1) BRAC savings are faux savings as these savings are outside the accounting cycle; with a lot of additional dollar expenses front loaded into the defense budget for infrastructure improvements to support transferred personnel.
- (2) Too much base reduction eliminates facilities needed to support surge capability. Some surplus is good.

Instead, ROA and REA recommend that Congress consider an independent Defense Realignment Commission that would examine the aggregate national security structure. It could examine:

- (1) Emerging Threats.
- (2) Foreign defense treaties and alliance obligations.
- (3) Overseas and forward deployment requirements.
- (4) Foreign Defense Aid.
- (5) Defense partnerships with the State Department and other agencies, as well as NGO's.
- (6) Requisite missions and elimination of duplicity between the Services.
- (7) Current and Future weapon procurement and development.
- (8) Resetting the force for a post-war context.
- (9) Critical Industrial base.
- (10) Surge capability and contingency repository.
- (11) Best utilization and force structure of Active and Reserve components.
- (12) Regional or centralized training, and dual purpose equipment availability.
- (13) Compensation, recruiting, and retention; trends and solutions.

In a time of war and force rebalancing, it is wrong to make cuts to the end strength of the Reserve components. We need to pause to permit force planning and strategy to take precedence over budget reductions.

RESERVE STRENGTH

"The challenges DOD has to face are not going to be handled by circling the wagons here at home," Dennis McCarthy, then-Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs told ROA at its national meeting in 2011. "We're going to continue to need a force that can deploy worldwide ... for the full spectrum of missions. ... With roughly 1.4 [million] active-duty servicemembers, 1.2 million Reserve component members and likely future missions worldwide," McCarthy added, "the military will need to continue to rely on Reserve strength."

The Reserve Forces are an integral contributor to our Nation's operational ability to defend our soil, assist other countries in maintaining global peace, and fight in overseas contingency operations. The utilization of America's Reserve and National Guard during all phases of military operations is a fundamental enabler to properly gaining and sustaining the support of our citizens. It should be noted that this principle, known by many as the Abrams Doctrine, has become more important since the elimination of the draft and in times of prolonged conflict.

ROA and REA agree with the Reserve Forces Policy Board that despite 11 years of war, there is inconsistency within the Pentagon on what is an operational reserve, which causes confusion within the DOD and leads to improper communications about the Reserve component's role to both Congress and the public.

This lack of understanding about the contributions of the Reserve component can handicap strategy planning and the budget process, as discussions occur in both Congress and the Pentagon on how to reduce the budget and the deficit. The peril of lowering defense spending is that the Reserve components will become a bill payer. The Air Force and the Navy are already making drastic cuts to their Reserve components.

REA and ROA would like to thank the Senate and members of this subcommittee who took legislative action to reduce the impact of recommend cuts to airframes and personnel that were touted by the Air Force.

However, the risk continues to exist where Defense planners may be tempted to put the Federal Reserve and the National Guard back on the shelf, by providing them "hand me down" outmoded equipment and by underfunding training.

The Reserve Components Remain a Cost-Efficient and Valued Force.

Reserve component servicemembers have significantly less overhead and infrastructure costs than their Active component counterparts.

On January 11, 2013, the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) delivered a report on military personnel costing practices to the Secretary of Defense. In its executive summary RFPB states that the cost of a Reserve component servicemember, when not activated, is less than one third of their Active Duty counterpart. According to

RFPB analysis of the fiscal year 2013 budget request, “the Reserve component per capita cost ranges from 22 percent to 32 percent of their AC counterparts’ per capita costs, depending on which cost elements are included.”

The RFPB found that the Department does not know, use, or track the fully-burdened and life-cycle costs of its most expensive resource—its military personnel. “Thus, major military manpower decisions are uninformed on the real present and future costs. The RFPB concluded that the Department suffers from a gap in its costing data, because it lacks proper policy to require a complete and consistent costing methodology that can identify the true fully-burdened and life-cycle costs.”

ROA and REA support changes to U.S. Code to require DOD to use a costing methodology based on a true fully-burdened and life-cycle costing.

The Reserve and National Guard should also be viewed as a repository for missions and equipment that aren’t addressed in the administration’s new Strategic Policy. They can sustain special capabilities not normally needed in peacetime.

Part of the President’s budget includes planned end strength reductions for both the Army and Marine Corps, by 80,000 and 20,000, respectively. It should be remembered that individuals cannot be brought quickly on to active duty on a temporary basis, as it is an accumulation of experience and training that is acquired over years that becomes an asset for the military. The Reserve is also a repository for these skills.

In the Hamilton Project-National Defense in a Time of Change, authors ADM Gary Roughhead, USN (Ret.) and Kori Schake recommend that “we must redesign our forces and budget to our strategy, and not to equal service share between branches. . . . Putting more of the responsibilities for ground combat into the combat-proven Reserve component is both consistent with the new demands of the evolving international order and justified by the superb performance of National Guard and Reserve units in our recent wars.”

The study authors suggest that Congress should reduce the Army “by 200,000 soldiers from the 490,000 planned in the fiscal year 2013 budget, and the [R]eserve and National Guard units would be increased by 100,000 and would have the principal mission of arriving in a mature theater for sustained combat.”

Rather than be limited by historical thinking, and parochial protections, creative approaches should be explored. The Reserve component needs to continue in an operational capacity because of cost efficiency and added value. Further, the cost of the Reserve and National Guard should not be confused with their value, as their value to national defense is incalculable. Civilian skill sets add to the value of the individual serving member.

To maintain a strong, relevant, and responsive Reserve Force, the Nation must commit the resources necessary to do so. Reserve strength is predicated on assuring the necessary resources—funding for personnel and training, equipment reconstitution, and horizontal fielding of new technology to the Reserve component, coupled with defining roles and missions to achieve a strategic/operational reserve balance.

National Guard and Reserve Equipment Allowance

The Reserve and National Guard are faced with ongoing challenges on how to replace worn out equipment, equipment lost due to combat operations and legacy equipment that is becoming irrelevant or obsolete. The National Guard and Reserve Equipment Allowance (NGREA) provide critical funds to the Reserve Chiefs and National Guard Directors to improve readiness throughout procurement of new and modernized equipment. Continued receipt of NGREA and congressionally added funding will allow the Reserve components (RC) to continue to close the Active/Reserve component modernization and interoperability gap.

Merger of the Reserve and the National Guard

Since the administration has a goal to consolidate infrastructure, there is a temptation by some to endorse merging the Reserve and the Guard as a means to save money. ROA and REA are against any such merger.

The various Reserve components—Reserve and Guard—are serving well as currently organized. They both have distinguished traditions of service that should not be trampled without a definitive rationale to do so. No case has been made that national security would be better served by a merger.

A merger may limit the President’s accessibility (ability to mobilize and use) to the Federal Reserve. There is some history reflecting noncooperation between Governors and the President when the latter has wished to utilize the National Guard. Access to the Reserve component combat commanders would be limited, with planners reducing the utilization of an operational reserve. The U.S. Army Reserve is now a Federal asset that can become a State asset (Guard); the U.S. Air Force Reserve has already flown support for State and disaster missions.

Merging of the Guard and Reserve at a minimum would involve nearly three-quarters of a million personnel. The reorganization caused by a merger of the Nation's Reserve components would be a mammoth undertaking, costing more than suggested savings.

No major defense figure has called for a merger—not the President, not the Secretary of Defense, none of the Service Secretaries, nor the Joint Chiefs, no combatant commander, and no Reserve Chief—Guard or Reserve. Indeed, the Reserve Chiefs of the USAR and USAFR oppose a merger. The calls for a merger have come from retired officers and State-level leadership with anecdotal and speculative opinion.

REA and ROA would like to thank Congress and this committee for amending title 10, U.S.C., chapter 1209 of section 12304a that allows title 10 reservists to provide assistance during a time of major disaster or emergency, and for amending Section 515 of Chapter 1209 that now authorizes Service Secretaries to activate Guard and Reserve members at times other than war or emergencies to augment the Active component. ROA and REA hope that the administration makes use of these new authorities by providing necessary funding.

Quadrennial Defense Review.

The QDR does not adequately utilize the Reserve and Guard in its national security review. The Reserve Forces Policy Board found that senior officials in the Office of the Secretary of Defense with responsibility for preparing the 2010 QDR did not ensure that it complied with the requirements of title 10, section 118, that specifies that the QDR include “the anticipated roles and missions of the Reserve components in the national defense strategy and the strength, capabilities, and equipment necessary to assure that the Reserve components can capably discharge those roles and missions.” The RFPB also noted that Government Accountability Office found that the QDR submitted to Congress in February 2010 did not meet this requirement.

ROA plans to publish a white paper this summer that will discuss anticipated roles and missions for the Reserve and Guard as input to the 2014 Quadrennial Defense Review.

RESERVE LIFE

Reserve and Guard members have provided unprecedented service and sacrifice for the past decade. Congress should make a commitment to them to provide lifelong support for them through career growth, civilian employment, seamless health care, family support and deferred compensation that has been promised to them upon retirement. This will be an incentive to continue to serve.

Continuum of Service

A continuum of service influences the way the Nation uses individual servicemembers and the way it employs its Active and Reserve Forces. It enables an effective use of our most important national security asset: the men and women who are willing to serve in the Armed Forces. It allows them and their families to continue to serve throughout predictable life-status changes, and leverages their skills throughout a career that is unencumbered with unnecessary barriers.

By consolidating Active and Reserve personnel procedures and policies, and permitting seamless transition between the Active and Reserve components, individuals can gain better control of their own careers, while the Services maximize the efficiency of force structure. A continuum would allow for flexibility and optimization of the Total Force by allowing special skills and functions to be activated as needed and returned to the Reserve component when not.

Continuum of service is a human capital strategy that views Active (full-time) and Reserve (part-time) military service not as two elements of valuable service but as a continuation of service where a qualified individual can serve in different capacities and durations during his or her career. A continuum of service strategy recognizes the tremendous cost of accessing and training each servicemember and seeks to avoid unnecessary replication of such costs by accessing those skills rather than replacing them.

Taken to its full potential, a continuum of service would require a re-examination of how service is credited and compensated, but would also allow for a more efficient management of our forces in a resource constrained environment.

This will require a seamless continuity of military healthcare, supported by TRICARE; and an accumulative documentation of both Active and Reserve active duty service, published on a single DOD form, rather than a series of Certificate(s) of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form 214), whenever someone leaves active duty.

Reserve Life Issues supported by the Reserve Officers and Reserve Enlisted Associations include:

Changes to retention policies:

- Permit service beyond current mandatory retirement limitations.
- Eliminate the fiscal year barrier, permitting the accumulation of active service between 2 years.
- Retain serving members for skill sets, even when passed over for promotion.
- Support incentives for affiliation, reenlistment, retention and continuation in the Reserve component.
- Advocate against cuts in Reserve component; support Reserve commissioning programs.
- Reauthorize yellow ribbon program to support demobilized Guard and Reserve members.

Pay and Compensation:

- Reject recommendations by The 11th Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation to reduce Reserve component pay for monthly inactive duty training in half.
- Reimburse a Reserve component member for expenses incurred in connection with round-trip travel in excess of 50 miles to an inactive training location, including mileage traveled, lodging, and subsistence.
- Eliminate the 1/30th rule for Aviation Career Incentive Pay, Career Enlisted Flyers Incentive Pay, and Diving Special Duty Pay.
- Simplify the Reserve duty order system without compromising drill compensation.

Education:

- Exempt earned benefit from GI Bill from being considered income in need based aid calculations.
- Increase MGIB-Selected Reserve (MGIB-SR) to 47 percent of MGIB-Active.
- Include 4-year reenlistment contracts to qualify for MGIB-SR.

Spouse Support:

- Expand eligibility of surviving spouses to receive Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP)-Dependency Indemnity Clause (DIC) payments with no offset.
- Provide family leave for spouses and family care-givers of mobilized Guard and Reserve for a period of time prior to or following the deployment of the military member.

Deferred Benefits and Retirement:

- Extend current early retirement legislation retroactively to Sept. 11, 2001.
- Change U.S. Code to eliminate the fiscal year barrier toward full credit toward early retirement.
- Promote improved legislation on reducing the Reserve component retirement age.
- Permit mobilized retirees to earn additional retirement points with less than 2 years of activated service, and codify retirement credit for serving members over age 60.
- Modify U.S. Code that requires repayment of separation bonuses if an individual receives a Uniformed Service retirement annuity.
- Continue to protect and sustain existing retirement benefits for currently retired.

Voting:

- Ensure that every deployed servicemember has an opportunity to vote by:
 - Working with the Federal Voting Assistance Program.
 - Supporting electronic voting.
- Ensure that every military absentee ballot is counted.

Continuity of Health Care:

REA and ROA support improving health care continuity to all drilling reservists and their families. While Transitional Assistance Management Program (TAMP) TRICARE and TRICARE Reserve Select (TRS) are good first steps, TRICARE is neither universally accepted nor accessible to everyone entitled.

The President's decision to reduce 5,235 full-time positions in the Military Health System will force more military personnel and families into the TRICARE network, and by reducing the Prime Service Areas, will likely reduce the number of civilian providers who will accept TRICARE beneficiaries.

Recent DOD policies on mobilization frequency of the Reserve and National Guard members set a goal of 1 year out of 5. This will make continuity of health care even more important to Reserve component (RC) members. ROA endorses enhancements to:

- Continue to improve health care continuity to all drilling reservists and their families by:
 - providing individuals an option of DOD paying a stipend toward employer's health care,
 - extending TRS coverage to mobilization ready IRR members; levels of subsidy would vary for different levels of readiness,
 - allowing demobilized retirees and reservists involuntarily returning to IRR to qualify for subsidized TRS coverage,
 - extending TRICARE coverage from the time of alert prior to mobilization,
 - allowing demobilized Federal employees the option of TRS coverage.
- Fund restorative dental care prior to mobilization.
- Request a GAO Review of TRR premiums which currently do not support a continuity of healthcare.

Reserve and Guard members experience problems when moving from their civilian health care to TRICARE while being deployed. They frequently must change physicians, which is extremely stressful for family members who require continuing care, such as a pregnant spouse or a family member who requires special care. Members and their families can also experience problems when returning to private healthcare insurance from TRICARE if there is a condition which began while in the TRICARE system.

Additionally, REA and ROA view the military health care provided to retirees as an earned benefit. This is also a deferred incentive that encourages both Active and Reserve members to be retained. DOD health care inefficiencies and wartime expenses should not be a financial burden placed on these retirees. ROA and REA are grateful to Congress for the passage of TRICARE Standard coverage for gray-area reservists but hope that the Armed Services Committees can request a review of premium levels.

Joint Military Professional Education—a need to expand.

A deep bench of Joint Qualified Officers (JQO) is essential to military planning and operations in today's national security environment. The architects of the Goldwater-Nichols Act recognized this and attempted to codify standards and career milestones to build a robust cadre of Joint officers. Although this act makes no distinction between the Services' Active and Reserve components, obtaining JQO Level III status, which requires both joint experience and education, has proven much more challenging for members of the Reserve components (RC) to achieve. The primary reason is that opportunities for members of the RC to attain JPME Phase II credit or attend Senior-Level Education in residence are more limited than for the Active component (AC). Members of the RC typically complete Senior-Level Service School through their respective Services' distance education program.

However, graduates of the Distance Education Programs (DEP) do not receive the JPME Phase II credit required to achieve the coveted JQO Level III status. So, in addition to completing a 12 to 24 month DEP, RC members aspiring to achieve JQO status must complete the Advanced Joint Professional Military Education (AJPME), a 10-month blended course, through Joint Forces Staff College. Altogether this can potentially add up to 34 months of education to achieve what most members of the AC do in 10 months at in-residence programs—despite the fact that nearly the same curricula standards apply to both the DEP and the resident education program (REP). To both provide equal access to achieve Level III status, and to better position the RC to continue to function as an Operational Force, barriers to educational achievement must be creatively addressed while not lowering standards.

Solution—Amend title 10, U.S.C., and adjust policy to provide that nonresident graduates of accredited senior-level service school programs receive the same JPME credit as resident graduates. It is acceptable to also require that a certain amount of the non-resident curricula also deal with joint issues. Further, the laws should be amended that provide that graduates of the Joint Forces Staff College (JFSC) Advanced JPME course receive Phase II credit.

Permit flexibility in the student and faculty ratios now required by title 10, U.S.C., to permit the nonresident programs to adjust and validate other ratios that

would still yield a proper joint education. The waiving of the current ratios would be solely within the control of the Secretary of Defense although his discretion should be limited to permitting a maximum ratio of 80 percent faculty and students coming from the host institution to ensure cross-culturalization.

ROA has suggested language to amend title 10, U.S.C., and will work with the committee to make these improvements.

CONCLUSION

ROA and REA restate our profound gratitude for the bipartisan success achieved by this committee by improving parity on pay, compensation and benefits between the Active and Reserve components. The challenges being faced with proposed budget cuts are going to make this committee's job that much harder.

ROA and REA look forward to working with the personnel subcommittee where we can present solutions to these challenges and other issues, and offers our support in anyway.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you to each of you for your testimony and your advocacy and your service. We appreciate it very much.

I wanted to start with Ms. Moakler just because you raised the issue of suicide. We are obviously still seeing a very high number of suicides by our servicemembers from those both returning from war and those who have never been deployed. In 2012, the military hit a tragic record high of 349 suicides, or 1 every 25 hours. This statistic obviously is heartbreaking and tragic, and should serve as a call to action for the DOD to do more to prevent our servicemembers from taking their own lives.

Ms. Moakler, you said that you wished the families and the servicemembers had been included in the work they are doing. Can you amplify what you stated and give me more information?

Ms. MOAKLER. Yes. Because of the need of accessing behavioral health care, because of perhaps not having access and the tools that they need to address the stress from deployment, we hear of many family members who have contemplated suicide or even have committed suicide. As a matter of fact, we have been hearing about three military children who have committed suicide just in Fairfax County over the past year.

So while the tools are out there, how do we determine—how do we pinpoint what we can give to families to meet their needs? How do we get the information out to them so that they can realize that there is someone that they can reach out to before they take drastic steps?

Senator GILLIBRAND. From other members on the panel, I would like your thoughts on this. Obviously we have a lot of challenges after separation. There is often a stigma associated with seeking mental health services. There is the Yellow Ribbon program and other programs we have often do not continue beyond the first year. Oftentimes post-traumatic stress disorder and other traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) manifest themselves over time, and so suicide becomes an issue over time.

What are some of your thoughts on this issue and how we should respond to it as a committee?

Chief BARNES. Madam Chairman, I would thank you for your attention to this issue and for the question. I know from my own personal experience while on active duty, I can speak to the tremendous stigma associated with seeking counseling and admitting the

need for counseling. That continues. That a major motivator, as you mentioned.

I believe it is a leadership issue with regard to—from the top down within the Department to uniform leaders with trying to communicate the importance of seeking counseling, and also educating servicemembers about the importance of that, not just with regard to suicide, but with regard to PTS and TBI conditions and whatever the signature conditions associated with service in Iraq and Afghanistan.

But I think that is really, really important to emphasize and try to address the stigma associated with that. I agree with the importance of looking at this more broadly with regard to family members and dependents.

Thank you.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Madam Chairman, I have to say there is a certain amount of intransigence to this problem. But I think there is at least some similarity to the sexual assault issue. Both of these are highly traumatic kinds of situations. They are deeply personal. People are, in many cases, very reluctant to come forward.

But I do think that there is an institutional element to that stigma. Just as you have talked about holding the command responsible for the sexual assault issues, we have had many cases, very frankly, where there was pretty atrocious behavior by people in the chain of command telling people, “suck it up,” “you do not have a problem,” “get back to work,” those kinds of things. We even had a very senior officer—it was several years ago—actually prosecuted a lieutenant colonel for attempting to commit suicide against the advice of the surgeon general.

To my knowledge, I have never heard of anybody being relieved for that kind of behavior. To me, I think that is one of the reasons why the stigma persists, because people see no penalty for the people who do engage in that behavior. Now, I have no doubt about the sincerity of the leadership in pursuing this, but I think in the chain of command, whether it is a senior noncommissioned officer, or an O-3, or an O-5, or an O-6, or a flag officer who tolerates the behavior or participates in that behavior. The person suffers the consequences, but the person who imposed that intimidating factor does not, that sends a message.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We, in the last NDAA, asked for a study, particularly about hazing. We said suicide resulted from a couple of hazing incidents. They happened to be New Yorkers. So we asked for an analysis by the military on incidents of hazing and how to get rid of it and how to address the issue. Ms. Moakler, you said that you were requesting that we ask for a study similarly for military families on suicide rates, which I think is a very fine suggestion.

Captain Hanson, do you have any thoughts you want to add to this debate?

Captain HANSON. Thank you. I was noticing how everybody was so quick going for the talk button. It just shows you how impassioned we are all on this issue.

The challenge for the Reserve and Guard is the fact that when they return home, they do not have the same type of ties to military bases that the members of the Active Duty component have

access to. So there are more challenges out there for getting them assistance, and there have been some good programs. TriWest worked on, for example, embedding mental health professionals right into units prior to deployment so that when these people returned, they had rapport already established.

Also the expansion that both DOD and the TRICARE contractors are working on of providing civilian mental health providers out in the field closer to the reservists and guard members has already been very helpful.

But one program that I would encourage is basically peer counseling. One thing you learn if you ever come in contact with a combat veteran is they feel comfortable only talking with someone else who has been through the same experiences. I think this is an important program to expand.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you very much. I want to thank all of our witnesses who are here today for their service and particularly the important organizations that you represent for our men and women in uniform and our veterans.

I wanted to follow up on this idea, Captain Hanson, on the Guard and Reserve assistance. I noticed in your prepared testimony you talked about the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program. As you mentioned New Hampshire in that program, because we have a deployment cycle support program that is really trying to put together the public resources from the Guard and then mirroring it with Easter Seals in terms of private resources to be able to provide our Guard and Reserve members support because they do not have—they do not go back to a base, so they do not have that group of peers that are even there or the active duty support structure.

So I wanted to get your thoughts. I know that you cite our program in it, and I am very proud of it. But one of the concerns that I have had is I have asked our military leaders to come and see it so that it is one thing if New Hampshire or Virginia or some other State has it, but every Guard and Reserve member across this Nation and their families deserve that type of support because we could not have fought the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan without their help. They go through the same traumatic issues and have so many issues that their families need support for, yet that structure is not there the same as in the active duty.

I wanted to get your thoughts on what more we can do to move this so that there is some consistency and national emphasis on this.

Captain HANSON. Well, Senator, I think you hit the nail on the head by suggesting better communications. New Hampshire, Minnesota, Montana, Maryland have all had outstanding programs, and one of the successes is sharing what each is doing rather than developing things independently. I think the lessons learned definitely have to be communicated.

I have to commend DOD that they have taken some special action to do that, and each of the Services have also shared. Coming from a Navy background, I know the Navy learned from the other Services, so it included such things as bringing family members into Yellow Ribbon and finding financing to help the more junior

people to be able to afford to attend these things. In fact, in many cases for the Yellow Ribbon Program, they are now soliciting private money for the States to assist in some of the financing that's occurring.

Senator AYOTTE. I can tell you in our program, the Veterans Count is a non-profit organization, so we are raising money privately to match the Federal dollars to have the community involved as well. But that does not take away the responsibility of the Federal Government, given what we have asked our Guard and Reserve members to do, along with our Active-Duty Forces in fighting the wars for our country and for our Nation.

Captain HANSON. One of the things that other States have done that they share with New Hampshire is going out into the community because it is important to teach community leaders about what type of stresses that returning members from deployment are going to be facing. Not that these individuals should not be responsible for their activities, but it has been pointed out that there is an adrenalin withdrawal after deployment, and a lot of substitute activities occur. The more people know about it, the more they can understand the situation.

Senator AYOTTE. Ms. Moakler, do you have anything to add to this because the family piece of this is incredibly important as well in the support structure.

Ms. MOAKLER. Well, I think that—I am sorry. I wanted to bring this up under the last set of questioning. Recently we became aware of a program in the chairwoman's home State of New York in Bay Shore, Long Island, where the VA has partnered with a local counseling hospital, organization, corporation, and the veterans, and, of course, our returning guardsmen and reservists are eligible for care and counseling from the VA as they return from deployment, as well as those who separate from service are offering counseling for the servicemember.

It is done in cooperation with the private counseling, and so the families are able to access that, and then, oh, my goodness, the doctors talk to each other, so they are able to treat the families as a whole and deal holistically with the reintegration problems that they might be having.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you. Mr. Strobridge, thank you for your service. I wanted to ask you about the TRICARE increases that are proposed in the President's budget. You had testified the concerns you have, the opposition that you have to those increases. You identified that you believe that the Services have not undertaken some of the hard work of looking for efficiencies. There has been a lot of discussion in the past about, for example, consolidation of health care commands.

I wanted to get your thoughts on what types of efficiencies and work should our Service bureaus be doing and should we be emphasizing with them rather than going back again to those who have served and asking them to pay—there are some very significant increases proposed here.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, Senator. We believe very strongly that the military health care system is built to meet the requirements of the Services, to meet the requirements of readiness. That is different from being built to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

The military is unique. The beneficiaries need—you need to serve readiness. It has that unique role. However, when people start talking about having the beneficiaries share some percentage of DOD health costs, those kinds of things have to be brought into the equation. When the system is built to have three different Service surgeons general and DOD running four different major contracts, and tons of subcontracts, and they are all competing with each other one way or another for budget share, that is not the way you or I would organize the system if we are trying to be efficient.

So there is a part of that that is, if it is the right way to do business, it is an institutional cost. When we deploy doctors, we send more beneficiaries downtown, which costs DOD more money. That is not the beneficiary's fault. The beneficiary should not have to pay for that.

When we implemented the mail-order pharmacy system in 2001, for the first 6 years there was no DOD effort whatsoever to try to get people to use it, even though at that time, every prescription was \$100 cheaper through the mail-order system. We actually were pushing. Just the preventive care kinds of issues, DOD just put out a big program saying we have—we are now paying for smoking cessation. Well, they only did that because you had to put something in the law requiring them to do it, and then they took 4 years to implement it, and they still do not cover Medicare eligible beneficiaries.

Another example, on the chronic conditions. What is the most important way to hold down long-term health care costs for people with asthma, for people with diabetes, those kinds of things? It is for them to take their medications. There are studies that show that even a modest co-pay deters people from taking their medications.

One of the things we had urged DOD to do was eliminate the co-pay for those chronic condition medications. Instead, we just jacked them up, and DOD is proposing to triple them. This just is not cost efficient.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you for your testimony. I want to thank all of you for being here.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. I also want to thank you, Madam Chairman, and committee members.

I feel better having you guys on the case. I have a son in the military, and it is good to know that there are great advocates like you out there battling for him. To those of you who are completing this chapter of service with more to come, thank you for that.

I kind of feel like I am in a schizophrenic world in the Senate because I go to Budget Committee meetings where a primary message is we are not cutting enough spending, and I go to Armed Services Committee meetings where a primary message is that the cuts that are being made or being proposed are too severe. Sometimes even the schizophrenia combines, so when active, major military figures say that the deficit is the number one security challenge, which we have had that testimony before us, it is challenging to know how to negotiate these icebergs and be pro-military, pro-armed services, and yet try to deal responsibly with a budget.

I think we would all say if we looked at deficits right now, they are not what we want them to be, and we want to manage them in a significant way, but do it right, and do it consistent with obligations.

Colonel Strobebridge, you were testifying earlier about TRICARE, and I was sort of struck. Your opposition as a coalition, you were speaking on behalf of the coalition, your opposition to the TRICARE proposals, but you are not opposed to reform. It is just this particular one you do not like because you cited in response to Senator Ayotte's question a whole series of reforms or avenues for reform that you think should be done.

If I am—I think I am accurate in this that the coalition in the past has also supported a number of reforms that have been done to health care or retirement on the military side.

So you are not an anti-reform coalition. You have supported reform efforts to try to find savings, is that not true?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, Senator, that is very true. When DOD, 2 years ago, proposed far more modest fee increases, they proposed a 13 percent increase in TRICARE prime, they proposed \$2 and \$3 increases in pharmacy co-pays, we took some heat for not objecting to those because we had really strongly objected to previous DOD proposals for a far higher increase.

We had always said, look, if you talk about—we are about principles. One of the big problems here is that DOD did go a long time without exercising authority it had to do any fee increase. What that meant, what that told beneficiaries each year was that we do not think fees are appropriate, any increases are appropriate.

Senator KAINE. Right.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. When you do that for a decade at a time, people kind of get the impression that it is not appropriate. Then you get a new Secretary of Defense, and we got a new budget problem. He says, let us quadruple the fees.

Senator KAINE. Right.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. That is—

Senator KAINE. Unacceptable.

Colonel STROBRIDGE.—unacceptable.

Senator KAINE. Yes, absolutely.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. What we have been after is trying to put principles in law: what are the fees, what is the reason for the fees, what is the adjustment methodology? We have done pretty much that over the last couple of years working with the subcommittee.

Senator KAINE. You mentioned something I completely agree with, raising the notion, for example, that military benefits, health care or otherwise, be means tested would be very discriminatory given the fact that we do not generally means test other Federal health or retirement programs.

I am not asking you to advance an organizational position, but clearly the idea of means testing broadly is an idea that is being kicked around a lot here. I agree it would be very unwise to do this on the military side without doing it more broadly.

But has the coalition or organization talked more broadly about what it thinks about means testing strategies if it really was a society-wide approach to dealing with some of our spending or deficit issues?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, sir, we have. We draw the distinction between programs—when you look at the programs that are means tested, they are either—you do not like to use the term “welfare programs,” but there are those kinds of things. They are social insurance programs. Social security is means tested. You get different benefits based on how much you earned. Medicare is means tested. You pay different premiums based on how much you earn. But none of those is earned by decades of service, and that is the difference. To us, if your benefit is earned by service as an employee, then that benefit should not be means tested.

We have had proposals in the past to say we should means test military retired pay or military retired pay cost-of-living adjustments. What that boils down to is if you get a job, you lose your retirement, or if your spouse gets a good job, you lose your retirement.

Then what do we tell someone we are trying to induce to serve 20 years under the conditions we have had, the war time conditions we have had over the last decade? Do we tell them if you serve these years, you will get these benefits, unless you get a good job, even if we kick you out of the Service in your 40s or 50s, or unless you marry a spouse who has a job, in which case we will cut your benefits. Is that a message that we want to send to people? Do we think that is a good career attractant? I do not.

Senator KAINE. Just extending the metaphor for the discussion, what about non-military Federal employees?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. I think that is the same thing, sir. When people make a decision to make a career, they are looking ahead to see what you earn for that. What you earn for your service is different than what you get from social security or from Medicare that is open to every American regardless of whether they work for the military or work for the government or not.

Senator KAINE. Just to make sure I understood your point. When you said earlier that to means test military without programs would be discriminatory, would be, and in my view that would be wrong. But even if we looked at means testing, you would draw a distinction between means testing social welfare programs like Medicaid, for example, might be allowable or in accord with principles. Means testing programs that are—like social security and Medicare where you are chipping in out of your salary might be allowable, but would not be allowable either for programs associated with military service or public employment.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. It is bad policy as an employer to tell your employees that the benefits they earn by serving you for decades are conditional. You are not going to tell them what the conditions are.

Senator KAINE. Yes, and I agree. If it was only a matter of employment law we were thinking about, you would be right. If we are dealing also with the reality of deficits and budgets that all of us as citizens have some desire and maybe even a citizen's obligation to try to fix, it is not just a matter of employment law and practice.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Well, in the end it is, sir, because this is my last time here. I started working military compensation issues in 1977. That was in the middle of a terrible erosion of benefits. We

had another one in the late 1990s. We do this periodically, and we always do it because of budget cutbacks, and we always rationalize.

You made the point, what is the ultimate? Is recruiting and retention okay? Well, when you are drawing down the force, recruiting and retention is always okay. We have used that in the past to say, gee, we cannot afford it. It is unaffordable if you project the costs out in the future, so we cut retirement benefits in 1986. They said the same thing we have today. Oh, gee, we cannot change the rules, so it will only apply to new people, as if that would not affect the new people. All that does is kick the problem 10 years downstream. We had to repeal it because then the new people ultimately would not stay.

We rationalized annual pay caps by saying retention is fine, so we can cut pay again. That is like driving by looking in the rear view mirror. You never see the problems ahead, and you keep doing it until you cause a retention problem. Then you have to scramble to pay even more to repair the force, and you end up with a hole in the force because a lot of people got out.

That is the consequence of the budget mentality, and that is why we have worked so hard over decades literally to put these principles in law. Congress only put the pay standard in law in 2003 because we learned the lessons of the past and we said, we do not want to do that anymore. The standard should be whatever the average American gets is what the military should get, and that is supposed to apply through good times and bad.

Now, the practical reality is it does not. We always cut when we are having budget—and we always pay it, and we always say when the problem comes, gee, we have to learn from that. We will never do it again. Here we go again.

Senator Kaine. Does your organization—last question—ever take a position on big picture issues like the right and wrong ways to deal with deficit and spending? Do you deal with it all with cuts? Do you deal with it with revenue increases? Do you take positions on that?

Colonel Strobbridge. I think it is safe to say that we have some of the same problems with taking a stance on revenue increases that you all do.

Senator Kaine. Yes. We have a divided—we have a citizenry that is of multiple opinions about it.

Colonel Strobbridge. Yes, sir.

Senator Kaine. I guess we are all in the same boat there. Thank you a lot. Thanks, Madam Chairman.

Senator Gillibrand. Senator King.

Senator King. Thank you. I apologize for being late. I was at a—

Senator Gillibrand. We will conclude at 4 p.m. in time for votes, so there is enough time for you to have a full—

Senator King. I was at a full committee hearing on the issue of Syria with Secretary Hagel and General Dempsey.

A couple of questions following up on the exchange, and please feel free to chime in. Just to be sure I have the numbers right, as I have been told, the TRICARE fees for enlisted—for active duty are zero. They are covered. We are really talking about retirees,

and the rates I have been told are \$270 for an individual, \$540 for a family. Are those in the ballpark? Is that right?

Chief BARNES. A little low.

Senator KING. A little low? How low? Can you give me a number?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. It is pretty close.

Senator KING. I think it is important just to know what we are talking about.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. For TRICARE prime for a family, it is now \$539. I think that is about what you said.

Senator KING. Yes, \$540 is what I said. Okay.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. About half that for the single people. But we kind of rush to say that is not the full premium people pay. That is what they pay in cash.

Senator KING. Okay. What else do they pay?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. We tell people if you want to understand the full premium people pay, it is—would you be willing to sign up to spend the next 20 or 30 years being deployed to Afghanistan on a regular basis.

Senator KING. I understand that. I am going to get to that next.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. No, that is it.

Senator KING. I am going to get to that next.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Most people are unwilling to do that.

Senator KING. But that is the number.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, that is the cash annual enrollment fee.

Senator KING. So the next question is, and I think you make a good point that you should not—if you are contracting with people essentially that you should not change the terms of the deal. When people sign up with the military, do they know \$540 a month is what they are going to have to pay for their health care in 20 years? In other words, what are they told at enlistment about health care benefits?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. They are not told details. They are told words like, you will have health care for life.

Senator KING. Is there an implication that it is free?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. In many cases, as you said, while they are on active duty, they are not paying it, and so many of them interpret it as meaning that. Many are very surprised that they have to pay anything once they retire. Many are surprised to learn they cannot go to the military facility anymore. They have to go find a civilian doctor. To a lot of people, that does not seem like much. To a military person or anybody who has spent their 20 or 30 years in one health care system, changing is traumatic.

Senator KING. But the question is, and perhaps, Madam Chairman, we could see the documents. I would like to see what somebody is given when they sign up. They must be given terms of employment, and it would be interesting to see what they are told about health care, and whether, in fact, it is part of what they are contracting for when they sign up.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Well, I used to write some of those, and I have seen a lot of others. I have never seen one that is handed to someone with 4 to 10 years of service that lays out specific premiums that will be paid in the future.

Senator KING. But you understand the line of my questions.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes.

Senator KING. You are essentially saying this is a contract that we are making with somebody when they sign up that they are going to get this health care in the future. I would like to know is that, in fact, the case.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. I guess that is a little firmer way than I would say it. That is—

Senator KING. Moral obligation?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Well, I would come to say that there need to be some standards. I do not think you are ever going to brief any person when they are coming up to reenlistment on all the details of what they will earn if they stay.

Number one, if they are 15 or 20 years away from retirement, Congress may well change it. So you cannot guarantee what they will get, and that is one reason why they are vague. But they say you will have health care for life. You will earn X amount of retired pay. They do not say, well, unless you get disabled in the line of duty, in which case you may have to give up part of your retired pay if you also get VA compensation. Or you may have to pay X amount of money for health care, because I do not know what the health care fees are going to be 15 years from now.

Senator KING. I am not being argumentative. I am new to this committee, so I am trying to understand and learn.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Sure, absolutely.

Senator KING. But as I understand it, if you retire from the military and you are a doctor and you set up a practice, and you are an orthopedic surgeon and make half a million dollars a year, your health care costs would still be \$540 a year. Do you think that is okay?

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Yes, sir, I do because number one, that person is probably not using TRICARE. He is probably in a facility where he is getting care on his own. So, you have to take those kinds of things into consideration.

But the issue is, did your Service earn the benefit or not? Very simple yes or no question.

Senator KING. That was the point of my prior questions. I am trying to get to the bottom of that of was that an expectation.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. Absolutely.

Senator KING. Chief Barnes.

Chief BARNES. Senator, we take an oath of office when we join the military. We do not necessarily sign a contract. One observation. The second point, within our association, we are communicating with three generations, those that are currently serving, those that are currently serving ends of careers and moving into retirement, and those that have served in the past, going back to the Korean and sometimes World War II conflicts and that era.

The older retirees are adamant with regard to commitments that were made to them in return for their service. Many believe they are entitled to health care for life, and many attest to being promised free health care for life. This has been tried in the courts. This is an issue. We reference this. This is a huge issue with them, their periods of service, them coming forward serving our Nation, and then how they were treated subsequent to their service.

Another point with regard to the TRICARE fees, those are adjusted annually based on inflation. There was a point made earlier

about the many years that DOD declined to adjust fees, the TRICARE prime fees. I asked that question when I was much younger and doing legislative service work in meetings with the Department over that period of time. This is a commitment.

Going back to my comments, and I think the comments of my colleagues here that is coming through, military service is unlike any other occupation or career field. It is essential that the pay and benefits associated with that service are unique and reflect that service. I believe that is—

Senator KING. I completely agree with that statement. I completely agree with that statement and understand it entirely. I am just trying to determine—it would be interesting to survey 21-year-olds who have enlisted and ask them what their expectations are.

Colonel STROBRIDGE. If I could comment on that. I think the expectations—a 21-year-old is probably not even thinking about it. They probably never gave two thoughts to it. It is at some point between the 4- and 10-year point where people get married, have children, start thinking about financial responsibilities, start thinking about do I want to keep doing this for a career or not. That is when they start weighing the sacrifices expected of them versus the rewards that they are likely to receive if they complete a career.

Very few people sit down and do the research to say exactly how much is it. They do some basics. They may look at a pay table and say, here is today's pay table. Here is what a colonel with 26 years of service makes, get a rough idea of the retirement. They probably do not do any investigation on health care. They assume, I think, that their health care will continue the way it is now, and they make those judgments.

Senator KING. Well, I understand. Madam Chairman, I know I am out of time. Just one more quick observation.

The sequester, which many think is a 1-year deal, is not. It is in the law for 10 years. The cuts that are coming, unless we can unwind that in some way, are drastic. The impact on the military is going to be and already is drastic.

From the point of view of the people you represent, you need to understand that you have a stake in how we collectively resolve this problem because if we are unable to do something realistic about it and have to absorb those cuts, these kinds of things are going to be very difficult, very difficult, because we are talking, in the next 6 months almost \$50 billion out of DOD, and multiply that by 10 in addition to the cuts that were made in the bill in August 2011.

There is a lot of discussion around here about these budget cuts. They are real. They are going below the level of—they are real cuts. They are not just cuts in growth.

So I urge you to think broadly as we are wrestling with this issue because there is no way to make those cuts without impacting virtually everybody in the military system. That is just reality.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator King.

Thank each of you for your testimony. Thank you for your service. Thank you for being advocates. We appreciate it. Your written statements will be made part of the record.

We also received a statement, for the record, from the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. Without objection, it will be included in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CHAIN DRUG STORES

INTRODUCTION

The National Association of Chain Drug Stores (NACDS) thanks the subcommittee for the opportunity to submit a statement for today's hearing on the President's fiscal year 2014 budget.

NACDS represents traditional drug stores, supermarkets, and mass merchants with pharmacies—from regional chains with four stores to national companies. Chains operate more than 41,000 pharmacies and employ more than 3.8 million employees, including 132,000 pharmacists. They fill over 2.7 billion prescriptions annually, which is more than 72 percent of annual prescriptions in the United States.

COMMUNITY PHARMACY ARE THE MOST READILY ACCESSIBLE HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS

Ninety-two percent of Americans live within 5 miles of a community pharmacy, making pharmacies among the most accessible healthcare providers. Local pharmacists play a key role in helping patients to take their medications as prescribed and offer a variety of pharmacist-delivered services to improve health quality and outcomes. With preventive immunizations and appropriate medication use, it is possible to reduce utilization of costly medical services such as emergency room visits and unnecessary physician visits. The proximity of community pharmacies to each and every American and pharmacists' exceptional knowledge and training renders pharmacies uniquely positioned to provide care for the American public.

PHARMACIST-ADMINISTERED VACCINATIONS IMPROVE PUBLIC HEALTH

Increasingly, local pharmacies are not only a reliable, convenient source for obtaining prescription drugs, but also a healthcare destination. For example, retail network pharmacies now provide vaccinations to TRICARE beneficiaries. Recognizing the cost effectiveness of pharmacist-provided vaccinations, the Department of Defense (DOD) authorizes TRICARE beneficiaries to obtain vaccinations at a retail network pharmacy for a \$0 co-payment. In its final rule expanding the authority of retail pharmacies to provide vaccinations, DOD estimated that in the first 6 months of the immunization program, it had saved over \$1.5 million by having vaccinations provided through the pharmacy rather than the medical benefit (Federal Register, Vol. 76, No. 134, p. 41064). This cost savings did not take into consideration the savings from medical costs that would have been incurred in treating influenza and other illnesses, if TRICARE beneficiaries had not been vaccinated. In addition, DOD also noted in the final rule that "adding immunizations to the pharmacy benefits program is an important public health initiative for TRICARE, making immunizations more readily available to beneficiaries. It is especially important as part of the Nation's public health preparations for a potential pandemic, such as was threatened last fall and winter by a novel H1N1 virus strain. Ensuring that TRICARE beneficiaries have ready access to vaccine supplies allocated to private sector pharmacies will facilitate making vaccines appropriately available to high risk groups of TRICARE beneficiaries" (Federal Register, Vol. 76, No. 134, p. 41063).

MEDICATION THERAPY MANAGEMENT IMPROVES HEALTH OUTCOMES AND REDUCES SPENDING

Medication Therapy Management (MTM) is a distinct service or group of services that optimize therapeutic outcomes of medications for individuals based on their unique needs. MTM services increase medication adherence, enhance communication and collaboration among providers and patients, optimize medication use, and reduce overall healthcare costs. Increasingly, MTM services provided face-to-face by retail pharmacists is proving to be the most effective intervention. For example, a recent study published in the January 2012 edition of Health Affairs demonstrated the key role retail pharmacies play in providing MTM services to patients with diabetes. The study found that a pharmacy-based intervention program increased patient adherence and that the benefits were greater for those who received counseling in a retail, face-to-face setting as opposed to a phone call from a mail-order pharmacist. The study also suggested that an integrated, pharmacy-based program, including interventions such as in-person, face-to-face interactions between the retail

pharmacist and the patient, contributed to improved behavior with a return on investment of 3 to 1.

A recent report by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) found that Medicare Part D beneficiaries with congestive heart failure and COPD who were newly enrolled in the Part D MTM program experienced increased medication adherence and discontinuation of high-risk medications. The report also found that monthly prescription drug costs for these beneficiaries were lowered by approximately \$4 to \$6 per month and that they had nearly \$400 to \$500 lower overall hospitalization costs than those who did not participate in the Part D MTM program. NACDS is confident that the TRICARE program could achieve similar results with an effective MTM program utilizing local pharmacists.

PRESERVING PATIENT ACCESS AND CHOICE IN THE TRICARE PROGRAM

NACDS is opposed to the proposal in the President's budget to make further changes to pharmacy co-payments and other policies that would further drive TRICARE beneficiaries out of their local pharmacies and to the TRICARE Mail-Order Pharmacy (TMOP). There are already strong incentives in place to encourage beneficiaries to use mail order, as a result of provisions in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013. Nevertheless, the President's budget includes additional changes. In most cases, TRICARE beneficiaries would be unable to obtain non-formulary medications at their local pharmacy. Furthermore, cost sharing will increase to as much as \$34 for a 30-day supply of a formulary medication at retail, and as much as \$66 for a 90-day supply of a non-formulary medication at TMOP.

In addition to unfairly penalizing TRICARE beneficiaries who prefer to use local pharmacies, NACDS believes this proposal is pennywise and pound foolish. Failure to take medications as prescribed, costs the U.S. health system \$290 billion annually, or 13 percent of total health expenditures, as estimated by the New England Healthcare Institute in 2009. Threatening beneficiary access to prescription medications and their preferred healthcare provider will only increase the use of more costly medical interventions, such as physician and emergency room visits and hospitalizations.

NACDS supports cost savings initiatives that preserve patient choice. For example, the utilization of generic medications by TRICARE beneficiaries is low in comparison with other plans. The generic dispensing rate at retail pharmacies—78 percent in 2012—is higher than any other practice setting. Partnering with local pharmacists, modest increases in generic utilization by TRICARE beneficiaries would have a dramatic impact on the DOD budget.

CONCLUSION

Thank you for the opportunity to share our views. We look forward to working with you on policies that control costs and preserve access to local pharmacies.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your testimony today.

Hearing adjourned.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE LABORATORY HIRING

1. Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Vollrath, the strength of our military not only resides in the outstanding capabilities of our service men and women, but also in the technological edge that they hold on the battlefield. Crucial to developing this technological edge are the 60,000 men and women of Department of Defense's (DOD) laboratory enterprise spread across 22 States—half of whom are degreed scientists and engineers. As DOD competes with industry for the best and brightest scientists and engineers, it needs certain flexibilities to be rapid in its hiring and aggressive in its retention of this segment of its workforce. What flexibilities are you giving to the DOD laboratories to recruit and retain the best and brightest scientists and engineers?

Mr. VOLLRATH. DOD labs are using numerous human resources flexibilities aimed at quickly recruiting the most skilled scientists and engineers, allowing for competitive salary offers through the use of pay banding, and rewarding high performers through contribution-based and pay-for-performance programs. Lab demonstration projects have access to Federal Government hiring processes, and are experimenting with numerous flexibilities to attract, hire, and retain high quality candidates.

These flexibilities include Expedited Hiring Authority, Direct Hire Authority, and use of interns. Additional specifics are below:

- The Labs have robust educational programs offering internships to students from high school through post-graduate school. These programs provide meaningful training and career development opportunities for individuals who are at the beginning of their Federal service. Programs include the Pathways Intern Programs, Recent Graduates Program, and the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation scholarship program for students pursuing degrees in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines.
- A Voluntary Emeritus Program or Corps offering retired or separated employees volunteer positions, thus providing mentorship from highly seasoned professionals.
- Acquisition Workforce Expedited Hiring Authority, National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2009, section 833, as amended by NDAA for Fiscal Year 2010, authorizes expedited hiring for positions in Acquisition Workforce career fields for which there is a shortage of candidates or a critical hiring need.
- Of special significance to the demo enterprise is the direct hire authority to appoint candidates with advanced degrees (Masters and Ph.D.) to scientific and engineering positions non-competitively. This legislative authority, established in fiscal year 2009 and amended in fiscal year 2011, has significantly increased the laboratories' ability to compete with private industry in quickly making firm job offers.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

HEALTHCARE EFFICIENCY AND COST EFFECTIVENESS

2. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, more work needs to be done to deliver healthcare efficiently within military hospitals and clinics. What are you and the Services' Surgeons General doing to make the delivery of healthcare services more efficient and cost-effective in those facilities?

Dr. WOODSON. At this time the Military Healthcare system is undergoing a comprehensive transformation that will streamline our decisionmaking and management in our largest medical markets and assessing the effectiveness of our current inventory of hospitals' ability to maintain a ready medical force and meet beneficiary healthcare needs. The Services are fully engaged with us in these efforts that will consolidate our approach to provide cost-effective and efficient delivery of health care to all our beneficiaries. We will achieve Initial Operating Capability of the new governance structure on October 1, 2013 and Full Operating Capability on October 1, 2015.

CIVILIAN FURLONGHS: IMPACT ON FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

3. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, we are concerned about the potential impact of civilian furloughs on critically important family support programs. If furloughs take place, do you expect any cutbacks in operating hours at commissaries, exchanges and child development centers or curtailment of morale, welfare and recreation, Department of Defense Education Activities programs, transition assistance program, or military spouse employment programs?

Secretary WRIGHT. Sequestration will impact funding across the board for family programs and services, and civilian furloughs will impact civilian positions that provide fitness, child care and family programs at the Installation level. The Department remains committed to providing military families with support programs and resources that empower them to address the unique challenges of military life, these programs are crucial to the readiness and quality of life of military members and their families; however impacts to programs and services may be unavoidable.

Commissaries

Furlough will result in the closure of each commissary 1 day a week.

Exchanges

Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employees are not covered by the requirements and procedures applicable to furloughs of appropriated fund employees under fiscal year 2013 sequestration. However, if the reduction in appropriated fund resources leads

to a curtailment in MWR or exchange business operations, NAF employees may be furloughed for business-based reasons.

Child Development Centers

Child development programs impact approximately 200,000 children daily. Guidance issued by the Secretary of Defense on May 14, 2013 exempting NAF employee and designated appropriated fund (APF) staff ensures that the daily operation of the installation child development and school-age care programs will not be negatively impacted by furloughs.

Family Programs

Impacts of furloughing family program personnel at the installation level include the possible closure or reduction in services of Military and Family Support Centers. Access to relocation support, financial counseling and education, deployment support, exceptional family member services, non-medical counseling, employment support, and transition assistance, could all be curtailed due to manpower shortages. Impact of furloughing National Guard and Reserve family program personnel in Reserve Family Assistance Centers may reduce capacity and hours based upon the length of the furlough.

Morale, Welfare and Recreation Programs

Civilian furloughs will result in reduced hours of operation and services. Access will be limited for fitness centers, libraries, outdoor recreation; recreational information, tickets, tours, and travel services; recreational swimming; recreation centers; arts and crafts skill development; automotive crafts skill development; lodging and Armed Forces Sports Programs (above intramural level) may be curtailed.

Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA)

DODEA employees will be subject to furlough for up to 5 days at the beginning of the 2013–2014 school year. Regardless of the number of furlough days, DODEA will ensure that all students will have a robust academic year. School staff will ensure that students receive a full year of academic study and school accreditation will not be impacted.

Transition Assistance Program

Transition Assistance Program (TAP) provides servicemember's career readiness training prior to discharge from the Military. We don't currently anticipate major delays in the redesign of the TAP due to sequestration, furloughs, and the hiring freezes. The Military Departments are on track to comply with law, the Veterans Opportunity to Work to Hire Heroes Act, and the Presidential Veteran Employment Taskforce mandates.

Military Spouse Employment Programs

Military Spouse Employment programs may face a delay in services on installations due to shortage of personnel to provide services. A furlough may degrade the quality of the event should contributing agencies be unable to support or assist in the planning and implementation.

EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT UTILIZATION

4. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, TRICARE's average cost of an emergency department visit is \$541 in the private sector while the average cost for an urgent care visit is only \$88 per visit. Yet, TRICARE requires beneficiaries to get a pre-authorization before they can get urgent care. Understandably, there are no pre-authorization requirements for emergent care. Essentially, TRICARE has created a disincentive for beneficiaries to use the less costly urgent care option. How much money could DOD save if TRICARE removed the urgent care pre-authorization requirement entirely?

Dr. WOODSON. DOD could save an estimated \$21 million per year by removing the urgent care pre-authorization requirement entirely. On October 1, 2013, we will implement a demonstration intended to test whether permitting active duty family members (ADFMs) to receive urgent care in the private sector without a referral from their PCM will result in decreasing emergency room (ER) visits and health care costs. Under the demonstration, ADFMs enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Prime Remote will be permitted to have four urgent care private sector visits per year without the need to first obtain a referral from their primary care manager. The hypothesis of the demonstration is that ADFMs often seek care in private sector ERs for conditions that are not actually urgent because they are subject

to a point-of-service charge for obtaining care from an urgent care clinic without having a referral to do so.

5. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, how soon could DOD implement policy/program changes and begin to achieve savings in this area?

Dr. WOODSON. On October 1, 2013, we will implement a demonstration intended to test whether permitting ADFMs to receive urgent care in the private sector without a referral from their PCM will result in decreasing ER visits and health care costs. Under the demonstration, ADFMs enrolled in TRICARE Prime or TRICARE Prime Remote will be permitted to have four urgent care private sector visits per year without the need to first obtain a referral from their primary care manager. The hypothesis of the demonstration is that ADFMs often seek care in private sector ERs for conditions that are not actually urgent because they are subject to a point-of-service charge for obtaining care from an urgent care clinic without having a referral to do so.

MILITARY HEALTH SYSTEM MODERNIZATION STUDY

6. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, DOD issued a Resource Management Decision directing a comprehensive review of Military Health System capabilities and requirements. What is the intent of this review?

Dr. WOODSON. The intent of the review is to assess the DOD's clinical delivery system and identify opportunities to increase our ability to maintain the clinical skills of our uniformed providers to assure availability of a ready medical force while improving effectiveness and efficiency of care delivery.

7. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, what is the timeline for this review?

Dr. WOODSON. This review is ongoing and will be completed by September 30, 2013.

8. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, do you expect your recommendations will include downsizing of facilities and personnel?

Dr. WOODSON. It is too early to forecast the recommendations of the Modernization Study because the data and models are still in development. The study will develop options to sustain the clinical skills of our uniformed providers while assuring availability of a medically ready force and improving effectiveness and efficiency of care delivery. Options will be developed that maintain or enhance access to care by evaluation of alternative delivery approaches.

IMPACT OF SEQUESTRATION ON TRICARE

9. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, Under Secretary Hale has told us that DOD may stop paying private sector medical claims this summer as a result of the budgetary impact of sequestration. If so, this would damage DOD's managed care support contractors' relationships with providers. What other options has DOD explored to prevent a delay in claims reimbursements to protect the integrity of the TRICARE provider network?

Dr. WOODSON. In order to minimize the impact on the Direct Care system and TRICARE, we intend to take risk in other areas, such as reducing Facility Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization projects; implementing a civilian hiring freeze; reducing equipment purchases; strictly limiting travel; reducing or cancelling contracts; and implementing a civilian furlough. Additionally, we have taken a reduction in our core research and development program. All of these actions are designed to preserve resources in order to maintain our ability to provide care in the Direct Care system and to continue to pay TRICARE claims and avoid harming the network.

10. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, what will be the impact on individual and institutional providers in local communities if their claims are not paid timely?

Dr. WOODSON. Sequestration could have a potentially ruinous effect on the provider network if we are forced to slow or suspend claims payments. We have spent years building a provider network that has come to recognize us as a reliable payer. Our goal is to maintain these good relationships and sustain the provider network intact despite the challenges posed by sequestration.

11. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, how might this damage the future of TRICARE provider networks?

Dr. WOODSON. It has taken us years to build our robust health care network. Our strategy is to maintain that to the best of our ability despite the devastating impact that sequestration will bring in other areas. We intend to take substantial risk in other areas, such as Facility Sustainment, Restoration and Modernization, in order to continue to pay TRICARE claims and avoid harming the network.

PURCHASED CARE VALUE

12. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, DOD's fiscal year 2012 budget requests almost \$16 billion to purchase healthcare services in the private sector. We understand why you need to purchase some services from civilian providers and hospitals, but we are concerned that your budget asks for almost twice the funding for private sector healthcare than for healthcare provided in military hospitals and clinics. How do you know if DOD and its beneficiaries are getting good value for dollars spent in the private sector healthcare?

Dr. WOODSON. The cost of health care services in the private sector is a key concern of the Department. We believe we are getting a good value for dollars spent in the private sector via provider discounts obtained through TRICARE managed care network contracts as well the TRICARE provider reimbursement rates being statutorily tied to the Medicare reimbursement rates. For beneficiaries enrolled in TRICARE Prime, our managed care option, our referral and authorization procedures ensure only timely and necessary private sector care is being provided to Prime enrollees, regardless of whether they are enrolled to a military treatment facility (MTF) primary care manager (PCM) or to a civilian PCM.

Through beneficiary surveys, we know our customers often prefer to receive health care services at a MTF versus in the private sector. The Department will continue to work to expand the capacity and capabilities of the MTFs as we welcome returning medical professionals from the war theaters and through initiatives such as the reengineering that will occur as part of the Defense Health Agency standup.

13. Senator GRAHAM. Dr. Woodson, do you have data to show that beneficiaries who get care from civilian providers are actually getting healthier?

Dr. WOODSON. No. We are actively working to provide access to preventive services and treatment, and to engage our patients in a partnership to preserve and even improve their health. However, measures of health outcomes (i.e. data that they are getting healthier) are still difficult to obtain. TMA has beneficiary survey data that looks at such issues as obesity, tobacco use and utilization of preventive screening services. Trending data for both the purchased and direct care sectors shows a slight decline in smoking rates over the past 3 years and an obesity trend that is flat. While we do collect Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set data for both the direct and purchased care, and we do have data for both of these sectors on such things as colorectal cancer screening, breast cancer and cervical cancer screening, this doesn't tell us if our population is getting healthier. It tells us only we are screening for these diseases. To answer the question if the population is healthier as a result of these screenings would require additional data on whether we avoided disease as a result of these screenings, which we do not currently have. TMA also currently does not perform a health risk assessment either in the direct or purchased care sector, which would give self-assessment information on the health of the individual, and in aggregate, the population.

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

14. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, it is unconscionable that servicemembers must wait many months to receive a disability determination from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While DOD and VA have made some progress in decreasing the amount of time it takes to get disability claims completed in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), more work must be done. Why are the Departments not meeting goals?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department shares your concerns regarding IDES processing time and we are aggressively taking action to reduce the cycle time.

Specifically, over the last 6-months we've decreased the time necessary to process servicemembers through the medical evaluation board (MEB) portion of the IDES 39 percent (132 days to 80 days average). We've also decreased physical evaluation board (PEB) time 25 percent (133 days to 100 days average). As a result, many of these MEB and PEB cases are now nearing completion as they move through the IDES Transition and VA Benefit Phases. If these trends continue and once we work through the bow wave of cases the acceleration has created in the later portions of

the IDES, by December 2013, we expect servicemembers to complete the entire IDES in significantly fewer days. We attribute the improvement to the following:

- Increased IDES staff levels by 127 percent (676 personnel) over the last 2 years.
- Authorized the Services to use Ph.D. psychologists (in addition to psychiatrists) to adjudicate behavioral health cases.
- Reduced Informal Physical Evaluation Board membership from 3 to 2 to increase their capacity to process cases.
- The Army improved its Medical Evaluation Board timeliness by 74 percent (reduced from 117 to 31 days against 100-day goal) at select locations by segmenting Soldiers into cohorts of simpler versus complex cases.
- The Army placed 15 Reserve Soldiers at VA's Seattle Disability Rating Activity Site to ensure VA has all the DOD information it requires to complete IDES disability case reviews and claims adjudication.

15. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what are DOD and VA doing to expedite claims through the system?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department shares your concerns regarding IDES processing time and we are aggressively taking action to reduce the cycle time.

Specifically, over the last 6-months we've decreased the time necessary to process servicemembers through the MEB portion of the IDES 39 percent (132 days to 80 days average). We've also decreased PEB time 25 percent (133 days to 100 days average). As a result, many of these MEB and PEB cases are now nearing completion as they move through the IDES Transition and VA Benefit Phases. If these trends continue and once we work through the bow wave of cases the acceleration has created in the later portions of the IDES, by December 2013, we expect servicemembers to complete the entire IDES in significantly fewer days. We attribute the improvement to the following:

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- The Army placed 15 Reserve soldiers at VA's Seattle Disability Rating Activity Site to ensure VA has all the DOD information it requires to complete IDES disability case reviews and claims adjudication.

16. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, do you believe the VA is doing all that it can do to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication?

Secretary WRIGHT. I do believe the VA is doing all that it can do to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication. VA and DOD continually work to improve the quality of service and timeliness for our servicemembers who transit the IDES. Most recently, VA requested and DOD agreed to position 15 Reserve servicemembers at VA's Seattle Disability Rating Activity Site to ensure VA has all DOD information it requires to complete IDES disability case reviews and claims adjudication.

17. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, does the VA need additional resources to hire more claims adjudicators?

Secretary WRIGHT. I do not have the required knowledge of the VA resourcing, their internal business processes, and disability claims processing rates to make that assessment. We are committed to working closely with the VA where we can to put enablers in place and enhance the completeness of the information which we provide which will help eliminate the backlog.

MILITARY TRAINING INSTRUCTOR MISCONDUCT

18. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, your combined statement indicated a DOD-wide review and assessment was conducted of all initial military training of enlisted personnel and commissioned officers following the incidents at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland. What were the results of that review and what actions have been taken?

Secretary WRIGHT.

Background:

The Army, Navy and Marine Corps performed a comprehensive assessment of their IMT using the U.S. Air Force Lackland Report as a basis from which to review and validate their own policies, procedures, and training. The Lackland report and subsequent follow-on reports served as the Air Force's assessment.

Results of Review:

The assessments revealed that although the Army, Navy, and Marine Corps conduct IMT in their own Service-specific manner, the majority of the recommendations from the Lackland Report were established practices throughout each of these Services. The Army, Navy, and Marine Corps reports describe in detail their internal control mechanisms that ensure proper instructor behavior and monitoring to include extensive leadership presence and oversight. In addition, each Service provides explicit guidance on behavior and expectations for leadership, instructors and support staff. Some areas of improvement were identified by each Service, but no misconduct or disciplinary concerns were cited. Areas needing improvement include ensuring sufficient manning of instructor and leadership positions, the assignment of appropriate numbers of female instructors and enhancing SAPR training delivery through the use of additional adult learning methods.

Actions Taken:

The Army, Navy and Marine Corps are all working towards achieving the optimum manning levels and improving the quality of instruction provided. The Air Force continues to make significant progress in addressing the concerns raised in the Lackland Report, and numerous new procedures and policies have been successfully implemented. Of the few remaining recommendations cited in the Lackland Report that have not been implemented to date, full implementation is expected by the end of the fiscal year. In addition, as recommended in the Lackland report, the multi-Service Council of Recruit Basic Training (CORBT) was established to provide a venue by which the Services can share best practices and identify potential areas of concern. The CORBT held its first meeting in April 2013 and will meet on a quarterly basis with general/flag officer representatives from each of the Services' Training Commands in attendance.

PROTECTING PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS

19. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, a recent tragic case in Maryland appears to have been a murder/suicide involving a prospective recruit and her recruiter. What guidance has DOD provided to ensure that prospective recruits and their parents or guardians are fully aware of the limits for relationships with recruiters?

Secretary WRIGHT. Each of the Services has policies and procedures in place to ensure that prospective recruits are fully aware of the limits for relationships with recruiters. During the recruitment process applicants are given a card or document that outlines acceptable behavior regarding applicant/recruiter relationships. As applicants progress through the recruitment process, more detailed information is provided. Applicants are free to share this information with their parents or guardians.

In a recent memorandum to the Service Secretaries, the Secretary of Defense directed each to review current practices and policies to ensure they are effective at protecting our newest and aspiring servicemembers. These Secretary of Defense-directed assessments will include: (1) the selection, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) training, and oversight of recruiters; (2) the dissemination of SAPR program information to potential and actual recruits; and (3) the prevention and education programs in ROTC environments and curricula. The findings will be reported to Secretary of Defense through me by September 30, 2013.

20. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what information does DOD require to be provided to prospective recruits to ensure that they have immediate access to assistance and intervention, if necessary, if they believe a recruiter is intending to take improper advantage of them?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Services provide applicants with contact information in the early part of the recruiting process. Applicants can use this information if they believe a recruiter has acted improperly. As applicants progress through the recruitment process, more detailed information is provided regarding appropriate recruiter behavior. In a recent memorandum to the Service Secretaries, the Secretary of Defense directed each to review current practices and policies to ensure they are effective at protecting our newest and aspiring servicemembers. These Secretary of De-

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DEFENSE SEXUAL ASSAULT INCIDENT DATABASE

21. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, your combined statement indicated DOD has achieved full-deployment of the congressionally-mandated Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID). What information, specifically, is DSAID providing DOD leadership concerning sexual assault incidents?

Secretary WRIGHT. The DSAID is a centralized system to collect and maintain information on sexual assaults involving members of the Armed Forces. Since achieving full-deployment, DSAID has been giving our Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) an enhanced ability to manage victim cases and assistance. SARCs input and maintain sexual assault case data, important documentation, and victim support history throughout the case lifecycle. DSAID tracks referral services to assess response efforts provided to victims in both the long and short-term. Tracking referral of services allows SARCs to better manage cases by accessing cases electronically, identifying cases for review and follow-up, and facilitating case management meetings. SARCs also use DSAID to document other information, such as the prevention and response training sessions they provide.

Victims benefit from the improved tools in DSAID as well. Victims receive improved care and assistance through DSAID's case management and meeting features, referral services tracking, and storage of the official form documenting the victim's unrestricted reporting option (DD Form 2910, Victim Reporting Preference Statement). To comply with recent legislation, we will be expanding DSAID's capability to confidentially store the DD Form 2910 in restricted reports. DSAID's storage capability for DD Form 2910 provides a central location from which victims may request access to this documentation. Access to records like this becomes very important to victims who may choose to pursue VA benefits.

DSAID also provides military service Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Program Managers with the capability for improved case management oversight, enhanced trend analysis, and access control for sexual assault personnel working in their Service.

On October 1, 2012 all sexual assault reports were being entered into DSAID through interface with a Military Service data system, or by direct data entry by authorized personnel. Prior to fiscal year 2012, historical data is not contained in DSAID because this data was not standardized across the Services. This year, DOD is closely monitoring the information entered into DSAID, conducting information assurance activities, and updating reporting modules to comply with legislation in the NDAs for Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013. The Department will use DSAID as its primary means to fulfill congressional reporting requirements beginning in fiscal year 2014.

22. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what additional tools does DOD need in order to continue to reduce—with the goal of eliminating—sexual assault?

Secretary WRIGHT. At this time, we believe the Department's strategic plan, Secretary of Defense-led initiatives, and unified data collection activities will help us reduce sexual assault.

Our data collection efforts are supported by the DSAID, which is a centralized system to collect and maintain information on sexual assaults involving members of the Armed Forces. DSAID is standardizing data collection and reporting in support of the Department and each Service's sexual assault prevention and response program. The availability of electronic data will also enable reports and queries to be generated quicker than in the past. DSAID will ease the burden of difficult and timeconsuming data collection, trend analysis, and reporting. The Department will use DSAID to meet congressional reporting requirements beginning this next fiscal year.

To fully leverage DSAID's functionality, the Department plans to evaluate additional data analysis means in fiscal year 2014. Expanding DSAID's current capabilities beyond operational reports to a complex analysis system will allow us to better understand the factors that influence reporting, victim assistance and accountability efforts. This expanded capability will deliver the data needed by leadership and stakeholders to better understand our progress in eliminating sexual assault from the military.

COMMAND CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

23. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what percent of commands conduct command climate assessments?

Secretary WRIGHT. One hundred percent of commands are expected to participate in command climate assessments. Commands are composed of several organizations and units all of which participate in the command climate assessments. If less than 50 persons are assigned to an organization or unit, a command climate assessment will be conducted at a higher level of the command to protect the anonymity of the servicemembers participating in the assessment. Existing DOD guidance requires all commanding officers to assess their organizational climate, preferably upon assumption of command, and to schedule follow-up assessments periodically during their command tenure.

24. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what is DOD doing to improve the regularity of command climate assessments?

Secretary WRIGHT. Command climate assessments involve the use of surveys, record reviews, and interviews to evaluate shared perceptions on formal or informal policies, practices, and procedures within an organization. Topics include, but are not limited to, equal opportunity, equal employment opportunity, and how well the organization functions as a team. We have considered commanding officers to be accountable for command climates in their organizations in DOD guidance since 1995.

In a memorandum to the Service Secretaries and Service Chiefs on May 6, 2013, the Secretary strengthened current guidance by adding mandatory questions addressing sexual harassment and sexual assault to climate assessment surveys; requiring command climate assessments to be conducted 120 days after assumption of command; and annually thereafter directing command climate assessment results to be reported to the next level-up in the chain-of-command beginning in July 2013.

25. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what is DOD doing to evaluate the results of the command climate assessments to ensure necessary follow-up action?

Secretary WRIGHT. The evaluation of climate survey results will rest with senior level military commanders within the chain of command. From an oversight perspective, I am particularly interested in noting that command climate assessments address the perceptions of servicemembers regarding equal opportunity and fair treatment related to policies and practices within the unit; the ability of the organization to function as a team; and the extent to which each servicemember feels like a valued member of the team.

Additionally, as part of the 2013 Sexual Assault Prevention Response (SAPR) Strategic Plan, the Secretary of Defense directed the Service Chiefs, through their Service Secretaries, to develop methods to assess the performance of military commanders in establishing command climates of dignity and respect to include incorporating sexual assault prevention and victim care principles, and hold commanders accountable. The methods for accomplishing this action must be reported to the Secretary of Defense through my office.

Reviews of the Service methods called for in the SAPR Strategic Plan will provide my office the opportunity to exercise the required oversight to ensure the Department's efforts are on track.

FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

26. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what is your assessment of the performance of DOD's Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP) and when will Congress receive the report on the 2012 Federal election cycle?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department's preparation, voter assistance provision and outreach during the 2012 election cycle were the best they have ever been, due in large part to the FVAP's strong partnerships with the Military Services, the Department of State, and State and local election officials.

FVAP engaged Flag Officers and Senior Enlisted Advisors to increase awareness of the right to vote and the ease of voting absentee. Voting Assistance Officers (VAOs,) trained by FVAP, sponsored voter registration drives at installation exchanges and commissaries, and events to increase awareness and encourage voting participation. Mass emails to all military members were deployed multiple times to reach all servicemembers and military dependents on installations, and voting notifications were printed on servicemembers' Leave and Earnings Statements. FVAP also provided in-person and online training to Installation Voter Assistance Offices and Unit VAOs.

In addition, FVAP teamed with State and local election officials to share expertise and best practice recommendations on policies and procedures affecting military and overseas citizen voters. FVAP provided direct and online training to ensure these officials were aware of the Federal requirements as well.

The Department conducted comprehensive communications and outreach campaigns leading up to the November election. FVAP made online tools available to guide voters to a completed registration or ballot request (the Federal Post Card Application (FPCA) or back-up ballot—the Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot) to be signed and submitted by the voter. The FVAP.gov portal was enhanced to provide more direct-to-the-voter assistance, including links to local election official information and State-specific information and forms. FVAP included print advertisements in *The Military Times*, *Stars and Stripes*, and *Military Spouse* magazine, complemented by online ads using behavioral, contextual and geographic targeting to reach military and overseas voters. FVAP also utilized the social media channels Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn to share timely absentee voting deadlines and procedures.

The FVAP 2012 election report will be delivered by June 30, 2013. The data gathered and lessons learned from the 2012 election will be used toward continued program improvements for the 2014 and 2016 election cycles.

OPERATION TEMPO OVERSIGHT

27. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, what is your assessment of the Services' Operation Tempo (OPTEMPO) reporting and how well are we meeting our OPTEMPO requirements to reduce stress on our servicemembers and their families?

Secretary WRIGHT. Keeping in mind that high OPTEMPO can cause undue stress for servicemembers and their families, we continue to carefully manage the dwell time of our forces across the Department and monitor the Services' achievements in meeting the established goals. We are encouraged that the Services are at or above the deployment to dwell objective (1x deployment: 2 x home) for the Active component.

We monitor and report this objective by quarter through our readiness reporting system. For fiscal year 2013, all of the Services have met or exceeded this deployment to dwell goal. Specifically:

- The Navy achieved its goal of 95 percent of sailors meeting a 1:2 deployment to dwell ratio;
- The Marine Corps goal is also 95 percent and had 97 percent of marines achieve the goal;
- The Air Force goal is 95 percent and had 97 percent of its airmen achieve the goal;
- The Army goal is 85 percent and had 92 percent of its soldiers achieve the goal.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE TRAINING

28. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, having military members with language and culture training are essential to a U.S. global force. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 authorized the Secretary of Defense to transform the National Language Service Corps from a pilot to a permanent program, and also enhance the ability of our Federal agencies to hire people with strategic foreign language skills and as National Security Education Program awardees. What are DOD's goals with respect to the capabilities represented by the National Language Service Corps?

Secretary WRIGHT. As a result of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, DOD will formally establish the National Language Service Corps by July 31, 2014. In order to respond to increasing demands for foreign language skills, the Department plans to increase membership in the National Language Service Corps from the current 4,200 to at least 5,500 and expand the number of languages/dialects represented from 283 at present to at least 350, by fiscal year 2015.

This increase will provide greater opportunities for the Corps to respond to requests in areas such as strategic language support operations (interpretation, translation, and analysis), training (instruction), logistics activities, emergency relief activities, and administrative language support services to Federal Government domestic and international activities.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

29. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, one effect of sequestration was that DOD quickly moved to end Service advertising, marketing, and outreach programs that have been used to aid in recruiting. What is your assessment of the value of funding these programs, and the projected impact to recruiting if these programs are not funded?

Secretary WRIGHT. Advertising and marketing programs create a means to maintain a high level of awareness of the opportunities and benefits provided by military service. In today's world of non-stop media, it is important that the Services have the resources to reach prospective applicants through a multitude of marketing activities. Research shows there has been a gradual reduction in the number of people who know someone who has served or is currently serving in the military. Combine this with the fact that only 25 percent of our youth are qualified to serve, and advertising and marketing become critical to keeping propensity to serve at a level necessary to sustain the All-Volunteer Force. Awareness and interest in military service is only achieved over time with repeated exposures to the opportunities available in today's military. By reducing the funding for these programs, the Military Services run the risk of reducing awareness and interest over the long-term with the greatest impact being felt in future recruiting efforts.

FLEXIBLE SPENDING ACCOUNTS

30. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Wright, the administration has still not implemented flexible spending accounts to enable military families to pay health care and child care expenses with pre-tax dollars. When can we expect these flexible spending accounts to be established?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department does not support establishing flexible spending accounts (FSA) due to the administrative cost of these programs and the corresponding limited benefit to servicemembers.

There are two types of FSAs: Dependent Care FSA (DCFSA) and Health Care FSA (HCFSA). Annual direct agency costs per member (2013) would be \$15 for a DCFSA and \$16.20 for an HCFSA. According to a 2010 Tricare Management Activity (TMA) survey, less than 20 percent of respondents indicated interest in participating in an FSA. Yet, the cost to DOD each year could be as much as \$3.8 million and \$4.3 million for a DCFSA and HCFSA, respectively. Additionally, the participation rates could be even lower than 20 percent given DOD civilian employee participation rates for 2012 were 1.5 percent for DCFSAs and 10.1 percent for HCFSAs. These costs and anticipated low participation rates argue against establishing FSAs.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY AYOTTE

MILITARY VOTING

31. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, it is our moral duty to protect the civil rights of our men and women in uniform and their families. They make tremendous sacrifices in the defense of our Nation, but those sacrifices should not include their right to vote. I believe DOD should treat military voting the same way it treats Servicemember Group Life Insurance (SGLI). Every time a servicemember changes a duty station or in-processes to or out-processes from a unit, DOD actively has the servicemember reconfirm their SGLI status. Why can't DOD treat registering to vote the same way it treats SGLI?

Secretary WRIGHT. We agree with you and DOD does treat voting rights like SGLI in that at each transition point in their military careers individuals are provided the opportunity to apply for voter registration or request an absentee ballot. As individual States run elections, a voter's completed form is sent directly to the State or local election official where the voter is requesting registration. We take the following specific actions:

1. DOD Instruction 1000.04 requires Installation Voter Assistance Offices to be included in the administrative in- and out-processing activities of reporting and detaching personnel.
2. Voting assistance is also required to be provided to all personnel, military and civilian, who are reporting for duty on an installation, detaching from duty and when deploying and returning from deployment.
3. The Instruction requires the registration and absentee ballot request form to be delivered by January of each year and again by July of even-numbered years.

4. The Instruction requires the Military Services to provide annually training on absentee registration and voting procedures to all servicemembers, including activated National Guard and Reserve personnel.
5. The FVAP focuses on promoting awareness of the right to vote and providing non-partisan tools and resources to vote from anywhere in the world. Resources available include the FVAP.gov web portal, an information-rich website with live chat assistance and online wizards that walk the individual through the process of registering, requesting a ballot, or using the back-up ballot (Federal Write-In Absentee Ballot).
6. FVAP also sends email reminders to all servicemembers with a “.mil” address, publishes voting notifications on servicemembers’ Leave and Earnings Statements and uses Public Service Announcements, social media, and print and on-line media.

NATIONAL GUARD YOUTH CHALLENGE PROGRAM

32. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright and Secretary Wightman, why did DOD cut training services to the entire field well below the National Guard Bureau standards, in order to address a small number of chronic underperformers by hiring a new and apparently duplicative contractor in a near dollar-for-dollar trade-off?

Secretary WRIGHT and Secretary WIGHTMAN. In fiscal year 2013, DOD was faced with funding restrictions during the continuing resolution period and fiscal challenges due to sequestration reductions. DOD placed a priority on fully supporting NGYCP at the maximum DOD cost share of 75 percent to ensure continued program operations and cadet development. The strategy to ensure operations resulted in restricting discretionary spending in other areas; such as staff training and travel. Our review revealed that training standards for NGYCP staff have not yet been fully certified. Since most NGYCP staff training is considered discretionary by the states and currently varies from state to state, we are working with National Guard Bureau (NGB) to establish staff training criteria. Results will be included in the program’s annual report to Congress. The goal of these assessments is to find the best methods for each individual program to maintain and deliver staff training by leveraging existing DOD and other Federal, State, and local agency programs.

The hiring of a new contractor in fiscal year 2012 was based on an assessment that a number of sites were not meeting cadet graduation targets. It was determined that analysis of student participation was required before more staff training. In fiscal year 2010, NGB had reported ten programs, nearly 30 percent of the total NGYCPs, failed to graduate at least 100 cadets per class. Seven of the thirty-two programs (22 percent) failed to meet their graduation goals by more than 10 percent. In 2011, DOD further reviewed graduation information, and assessed that after recent funding increases over the past several years, there had been only negligible increases in the number of NGYCP graduates. In fiscal year 2012, we realized that without reversing this downward trend, coupled with the continued implementation of the SECDEF efficiencies initiative, the funding support for the program could be seriously jeopardized. The goal of the new contract proposal is to investigate and identify any process and technical reasons for the declining trend in the performance of certain NGYCPs, and to recommend appropriate solutions to policies and regulations that could be implemented at the Departmental, State and local levels.

We continue to closely oversee the Youth Challenge Program in accordance with statutory authority, and intend to assist the NGB to further strengthen this important program. We appreciate your support.

BEYOND YELLOW RIBBON/DEPLOYMENT CYCLE SUPPORT PROGRAM

33. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wightman, I would like to thank you for your office’s past support for National Guard and Reserve outreach and integration programs. On March 26, 2013, Senator Shaheen and I sent you a letter regarding Beyond the Yellow Ribbon outreach programs. These programs have helped thousands of servicemembers and their families ease the transition back into civilian life over the better part of the last decade. Do you commit to utilizing the full amount appropriated by Congress for the purpose of funding existing programs with strong records of success and using unspent balances to evaluate programs to develop a nationwide set of best practices or to initiate similar programs in other States?

Secretary WIGHTMAN. The Department commits to utilizing the full amount of supplemental funding appropriated by Congress for its Beyond the Yellow Ribbon outreach programs. In accordance with congressional guidance, the additional fund-

ing shall be used for National Guard and Reserve outreach and reintegration programs with strong records of success, National Guard and Reserve employment enhancement programs and peer-to-peer hotline services. A portion of the funding shall be used to evaluate those programs to develop a nationwide set of best practices. This is a continuation of efforts that Congress began supporting in 2011 with an original \$16 million in supplemental OCO funding.

NAVY FURLOUGHES

34. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, I remain concerned about the impact furloughs will have on our military readiness—not to mention the financial hardship they will inflict on our DOD civilians who perform critical tasks at our shipyards and depots. I hope that we can eliminate furloughs for the entire department. However, if the Navy has a plan to avoid furloughs, the Navy should be allowed to implement that plan regardless of the other Services. Are you aware of the Navy's plan to avoid furloughs?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department must evaluate the impact of sequestration cuts across all military service accounts. The sequestration cuts \$20 billion in operating accounts, requiring cuts in training and maintenance that are harming readiness. The Navy delayed deployments and cut back on training, including one less carrier strike group in the Gulf. In addition to the sequestration cuts, we have a \$7 to \$10 billion shortfall in our fiscal year 2013 war costs due to higher operating tempo and transport costs than we estimated 2 years ago.

While we appreciate your desire to allow the Navy maximum flexibility to avoid civilian furloughs, DOD's most important responsibility is national security. In reallocating resources throughout the Department to the highest national security priorities, we will strive for consistency and fairness across the Department. As announced by the Secretary of Defense on May 14, 2013, most of the Department's civilian personnel will be subject to furloughs of up to 11 days to help cover operating shortfalls. However, DOD guidance allowed for a specific limited number of exceptions driven by law and by the need to minimize harm to mission execution. Accordingly, civilian employees in Navy shipyards will be excepted from furloughs because it would be particularly difficult to make up delays in maintenance work on nuclear vessels and these vessels are critical to mission success.

35. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, would you support the Navy's request to avoid furloughs regardless of the actions of the other Services?

Secretary WRIGHT. The Department must evaluate the impact of sequestration cuts across all military service accounts. While we appreciate your desire to allow the Navy maximum flexibility to avoid civilian furloughs, DOD's most important responsibility is national security. In reallocating resources throughout the Department to the highest national security priorities, we will strive for consistency and fairness across the Department. As announced by the Secretary of Defense on May 14, 2013, most of the Department's civilian personnel will be subject to furloughs of up to 11 days to help cover operating shortfalls. However, DOD guidance allowed for a specific limited number of exceptions driven by law and by the need to minimize harm to mission execution. Accordingly, civilian employees in Navy shipyards will be excepted from furloughs because it would be particularly difficult to make up delays in maintenance work on nuclear vessels and these vessels are critical to mission success.

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

36. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, in order to achieve end strength reductions, it has been said that the Army in particular might have to utilize involuntary separations. Has the Army had to utilize involuntary separations thus far?

Secretary WRIGHT. Yes, the Army has used involuntary separations to properly shape their force and ensure they are postured correctly for mission readiness and to meet all national security objectives.

37. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, do you anticipate that the Army will have to use involuntary separations to achieve end strength reductions?

Secretary WRIGHT. I anticipate the Army will continue to use involuntary separations to properly shape their force and ensure they are postured correctly for mission readiness and to meet all national security objectives.

38. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, if sequestration goes forward, do you believe that the Army and Marine Corps will have to further reduce their end strengths?

Secretary WRIGHT. The fiscal year 2014 budget builds on the choices from the previous budget cycle and further implements the defense strategy articulated in January 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance. In developing our fiscal year 2014 budget and planning for future years, we reduced the size of the Joint Force commensurate with requirements for future missions, while at the same time ensuring full support for our All-Volunteer Force.

If sequester levels remain in place, we will ask for flexibility to apply the reductions in a more strategic manner than the current sequestration rules that require large and sudden reductions to defense spending in a rigid, across-the-board manner. The Department has initiated the Strategic Choices and Management Review to focus on the choices we have to make in fiscal year 2015 and beyond, informed by the strategy that was put forth by the President a year ago. We will have to look at everything, including further force cuts to absorb a \$52 billion level reduction.

39. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Wright, would large additional end strength reductions due to sequestration likely necessitate the more aggressive use of involuntary separations?

Secretary WRIGHT. Sequestration should have minimal effect on end strength. Sequestration primarily affects our civilian personnel, since uniformed personnel are exempt from sequestration cuts. If, however, reductions to the budget force additional end strength reductions, increases in involuntary separation actions may be necessary as this is the fastest way to accelerate a drawdown.

[Whereupon, at 3:59 p.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

**DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE AUTHORIZATION
FOR APPROPRIATIONS FOR FISCAL YEAR
2014 AND THE FUTURE YEARS DEFENSE
PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2013

U.S. SENATE,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON PERSONNEL,
COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES,
Washington, DC.

**CONTINUATION OF TESTIMONY ON THE ACTIVE,
GUARD, RESERVE, AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL PRO-
GRAMS**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:10 a.m. in room SR-222, Russell Senate Office Building, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Committee members present: Senators Gillibrand, Blumenthal, Ayotte, and Graham.

Majority staff members present: Jonathan D. Clark, counsel; Gabriella E. Fahrner, counsel; Gerald J. Leeling, general counsel.

Minority staff members present: Steven M. Barney, minority counsel; and Allen M. Edwards, professional staff member.

Staff assistant present: Jennifer R. Knowles.

Committee members' assistants present: Kathryn Parker, assistant to Senator Gillibrand; Brad Bowman, assistant to Senator Ayotte; Craig Abele, assistant to Senator Graham; and Charles Prosch, assistant to Senator Blunt.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR KIRSTEN E. GILLIBRAND,
CHAIRMAN**

Senator GILLIBRAND. The subcommittee meets today to receive testimony from the Military Services on military and civilian personnel programs contained in the administration's national defense authorization request for fiscal year 2014 and the Future Years Defense Program.

With us today are the senior leaders responsible for military and civilian personnel matters in each of the Services. In addition to discussing their plans and programs for fiscal year 2014, we will also look forward to hearing about specific budget items relevant to our subcommittee's oversight responsibilities.

Your statements and testimony today are extremely important as we prepare to mark up the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2014, and to find a way ahead with respect to the

Budget Control Act (BCA) and the effects that sequestration is having on our Nation's military.

Our witnesses today are the Honorable Thomas R. Lamont, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Honorable Juan M. Garcia III, Assistant Secretary of the Navy for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; the Honorable Daniel B. Ginsberg, Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Manpower and Reserve Affairs; Lieutenant General Howard B. Bromberg, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-1, U.S. Army; Vice Admiral Scott R. Van Buskirk, Chief of Naval Personnel, U.S. Navy; Lieutenant General Robert E. Milstead, Jr., Deputy Commandant for Manpower and Reserve Affairs, U.S. Marine Corps; and Lieutenant General Darrell D. Jones, Deputy Chief of Staff for Manpower, Personnel and Services in the U.S. Air Force.

As I stated at our oversight hearing last week, there is no greater responsibility for Congress and military leaders than to support our courageous and dedicated servicemembers, their families, and the civilian employees who are a vital component of the military team. For more than a decade, Congress has ensured that our military personnel receive a pay raise that meets or exceeds the increase in private sector wages. We have also been able to substantially enhance health care benefits, though I would like to see us expand the benefit further to include coverage for autism therapy for all TRICARE beneficiaries.

However, this subcommittee faces a very clear challenge this year as we address the need to control the increasing costs of personnel programs. I am deeply committed and concerned about the rising costs of health care for both our Active Duty and retirees, and I believe we need to consider all other options before breaking faith with our servicemembers on this.

This challenge is made more difficult by the significant budgetary and programmatic pressures imposed by sequestration under the BCA. As the result of sequestration, the Department has told us that it already has taken extraordinary measures to cope with the across-the-board cuts of nearly 8 percent. The President's budget request for fiscal year 2014 does not account for any sequester of funding for that fiscal year, which, if it remains in effect, would reduce the Department's budget by yet another \$52 billion, further affecting morale and military readiness.

While military personnel pay accounts are exempt from sequestration, the funding to pay for the Department of Defense (DOD) civilian employees, family support programs, health care claims, and training, among other things, are not. I am particularly concerned about the effects that possible furloughs are already having on the morale of DOD's 800,000 civilian employees who are an integral component to the military's total force in crucial fields, such as cyber security and health care. I worry that breaking our commitment to our civilian workforce in this way will have devastating effects, not only on the morale, but the future propensity to continue their civil service, but on the critical services and support programs for servicemembers and their families, including DOD schools, child care centers, and access to health care.

Because of the tenuous budget environment, difficult choices had to be made by the President, DOD leadership, and the Services.

The subcommittee intends to carefully examine each of them as we begin consideration of the annual defense bill.

As you know by now, I am deeply committed to addressing the scourge of sexual assault of our men and women in uniform. At the hearing with the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) officials, I also discussed several other personnel issues that are important to me as we begin this budget cycle, in particular, hazing, DOD's proposed health care fee increases, and the provision of benefits to same sex partners.

The Army and Marine Corps continue to draw down their forces. The Army requested fiscal year 2014 Active Duty end strength of 520,000. That is 32,000 below the fiscal year 2013 authorized level. Moreover, we know that the Army will finish this fiscal year with 530,000 soldiers, primarily because of success in reducing the backlog of its wounded soldiers processing out of the military and back into civilian life, which is a good story.

Finally, I and the rest of Congress remain extremely troubled about the number of servicemembers who are committing suicide, both Active Duty and Reserve component members. Another facet to this issue that was brought to our attention at last week's hearing is the military dependent suicides, and whether the Services are tracking or even at this point whether they have the capability of tracking those tragic deaths.

I look forward to hearing about each of these issues from the Service perspective. We want to hear in your views what you believe your Service is doing well, what challenges remain, and how Congress can help so that we can best provide for our servicemembers, civilians, retirees, and families.

Now I would like to give the floor to Senator Graham.

STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you, Madam Chairman. It has been a pleasure working with you on the subcommittee. This is, I think, the best one to have because we are in charge of the men and women who serve and their families. This is really a wonderful opportunity to make sure that Congress listens and we get it right.

Two areas: the sustainability of health care costs. They are just unsustainable. We are going to have to do something about TRICARE. We are going to have to make it more sustainable for those who are on it and for the military's budget. Second, sequestration seems to me one of the most ill-conceived ideas in a place that is known for ill-conceived ideas. That is pretty impressive. We can maybe top the list here.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs said that sequestration was affecting morale, and it is detrimental to morale. So could you please focus on that? Tell us from a military personnel/family point of view what are we doing to our men and women in uniform and their families under sequestration.

Thank you all for your service.

Senator GILLIBRAND. In the interest of time, I will be calling only on the Assistant Secretaries to provide oral statements. I ask that each of you keep your oral statements to 3 to 5 minutes in length. Your complete prepared statements will be included in the record.

Following the opening statements, we will limit our questions to 7 minutes per round.

I am going to call on our witnesses by Service, starting with the Army. Mr. Lamont?

STATEMENT OF HON. THOMAS R. LAMONT, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE ARMY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. LAMONT. Thank you. Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, distinguished members of this committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I am honored to represent the 1.1 million men and women serving in the U.S. Army in uniform, and our more than 260,000 army civilians.

This combat seasoned force has performed superbly over more than a decade of war and now faces the difficult task of reducing strength during this time of fiscal constraint. We will do this in a careful and deliberate manner, ensuring the future of the All-Volunteer Force while maintaining the best army in the world.

Our challenge is to ensure that we balance the congressional mandate, which I quote, "to fulfill the current and future operational requirements of combat and commands," with the need to maintain our All-Volunteer Force. We recognize our greatest moral obligation is to ensure that our Nation's sons and daughters are fully prepared and trained when called on to risk their lives for the defense of freedom, and then to ensure the service and capabilities exist to care for these brave Americans.

As we manage constrained resources, we look to ensure that soldier-focused programs, such as recruiting, compensation, educational opportunities, Sexual Harassment Assault Response and Prevention, suicide prevention, and transition assistance are balanced with the requirement to train and equip our Army to ensure its success on today's complex battlefields. We must ensure that however large the Army may be, we maintain its readiness, even as we sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

To ensure a force of the highest quality soldiers, the Army must likewise balance recruitment, retention, promotions, voluntary and involuntary separations, and natural losses. To assist our soldiers and civilians who will transition to employment in the private sector, we must equip them with the skills and knowledge to continue their professional growth. We must continue to keep faith with the soldiers and family members who sacrificed so much for our country.

We continue to work with the Veterans Administration (VA) to streamline the disability system and improve coordination for health care, compensation, and benefits for our medically-separated and retired soldiers. The Army must also maintain its focus on assisting our soldiers and family members struggling with depression, substance abuse, and other health of the force issues.

The American soldier is the centerpiece of everything we do in the Army. Our efforts must remain focused on the preservation of our most precious resource: our people. I can assure you that your Army will continue to meet the Nation's needs whenever and wherever it is called to serve.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for your support, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Lamont and Lieutenant General Bromberg follows:]

JOINT PREPARED STATEMENT BY HON. THOMAS R. LAMONT AND LTG HOWARD B. BROMBERG, USA

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, distinguished members of this subcommittee, we thank you for the opportunity to appear before you on behalf of America's Army. The U.S. Army is a values-based organization that exists to serve the American people, to defend the Nation, to protect vital national interests, and to fulfill national military responsibilities. We are now poised to execute a historic drawdown of both our military and civilian personnel, and we are proposing to do it in a deliberate, responsible, and careful manner. Thousands of individuals will transition out of military and civil service and deserve quality transition assistance.

While the future Army will be smaller, the Army is implementing a number of changes in force structure and other capabilities to ensure it remains the best led, best trained and best equipped land force in the world today and in the future. Our soldiers have performed superbly during more than a decade of war, displaying the values, character and competence that make our Army second to none. We must not waver on our commitment to support all those who have served with courage, pride, and honor.

Thank you for your steadfast commitment to ensuring that the needs of our soldiers, their families, and our civilian workforce are met by supporting our personnel initiatives to ensure the sustainment and well being of our All-Volunteer Force.

STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

The Army has been in a state of continuous war for nearly 12 years—the longest in our Nation's history. More than 4,800 soldiers have given their lives on behalf of this Nation. Today we have more than 81,000 soldiers committed to operations around the world with approximately 58,000 in Afghanistan. Nearly 1.5 million soldiers have deployed and more than half a million have deployed multiple times—some as many as six times. Additionally, Army civilians shoulder a majority of the Generating Force mission, and 30,000 civilians have deployed into harm's way. Our soldiers, civilians, and families remain vital to the strength of our Nation.

Now we will transition to a smaller force, while continuing to remain vigilant of new threats and prepare for new capabilities and requirements. To maintain an All-Volunteer Force of the highest quality soldiers and achieve our end-strength goal, the Army must responsibly balance force shaping across accessions, retention, promotions, voluntary and involuntary separations, and natural losses. We will leverage the Army Total Force Policy, for full integration of our Active and Reserve components, maximizing each component's strengths, in order to continue accomplishing our mission in a time of fiscal constraints. We will expand opportunities to women in the Army by opening up previously closed positions and career paths. We will ensure quality assistance to our soldiers and civilians who transition from their military and civil service careers to employment in the private sector.

We are currently working with the Veterans Administration to streamline the disability system and improve coordination for health care, compensation, and benefits for our medically separated and retired soldiers. The Army also continues to focus on assisting our soldiers and family members struggling with depression, substance abuse, and other Health of the Force issues. This year we have implemented "Ready and Resilient," a new comprehensive campaign—designed to enhance individual and collective resilience and improve readiness.

The American soldier is the centerpiece of everything we do in the Army. Our efforts must remain focused on the preservation of our most precious resource, our people.

DRAWDOWN/END STRENGTH

In keeping with the National Defense Strategy, the Army is building our future force to meet the Nation's requirements. The Army is reducing its Active component end strength to 490,000 soldiers by fiscal year 2017. The Army has already reduced the additional temporary end strength increase of 22,000 soldiers, approved in 2009

by the Secretary of Defense, and is on target to be at an Active component end strength of 530,000 by the end of fiscal year 2013. In fiscal year 2014, the Army will begin to take further steps to achieve the end state force of 490,000 by fiscal year 2017.

Based on Total Army Analysis of future requirements, the force structure effective in fiscal year 2017 requires an additional decrease of approximately 5,700 enlisted soldiers and 6,900 officers beyond our current rate of attrition over this same period. Our projected drawdown ramp allows for funding 490,000 of end strength in the base budget in fiscal year 2014 and beyond, with all other end strength resourced with Overseas Contingency Operations funding. This ramp allows for a steady enlisted annual accession mission of about 68,000 and an Active Army Competitive Category officer mission of about 4,600. Our strength projections also incorporate additional soldier inventory to mitigate the impact of nondeployable soldiers in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System. Temporary end strength Army medical is present in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 and fully eliminated by the end of fiscal year 2015.

To maintain the highest quality All-Volunteer Army, we will execute the upcoming force reductions in a responsible and targeted fashion while maintaining a ready force. To achieve planned end strength reductions, the Army expects to use various types of separation authorities across all elements of the force (Officer and Enlisted). The National Defense Authorization Acts for Fiscal Year 2012 and Fiscal Year 2013 provided several incentive authorities to help the Army shape the force over the drawdown period, along with the flexibility to apply them to meet specific grade and skill requirements. Under normal loss rates, the Army will not be able to reach its end strength goal over the fiscal year 2013–fiscal year 2017 period. There is no single force shaping method among the choices of accessions, retention and separations that will achieve the Army's end strength goals, and there will be good soldiers who we cannot retain. Reduced accession levels, promotion selectivity and tightened retention standards will help shape our force naturally. Through these processes, we expect to lose some combat-seasoned soldiers and leaders, but our focus will be on retaining the best individuals in the right grades and skills. As soldiers depart our active duty formations, the Army is committed to assisting them and their families as they transition to the Army Reserve, National Guard, or civilian life.

RECRUITING AND RETENTION (OFFICER AND ENLISTED)

Our soldiers are the Army's most important resource, and our ability to meet the challenges of the current and future operational environment depends on our ability to sustain the All-Volunteer Force. Even as we drawdown the Army, we must continue to bring high quality men and women into the force to grow our future leaders. We must also retain the most talented soldiers with the experience and skills necessary to meet our future needs.

Despite the challenges of an ongoing conflict, future drawdown plans, and budgetary constraints, the active Army and the Army Reserve once again exceeded their enlisted retention missions in fiscal year 2012. Focusing on required grades and skills, the Army National Guard reduced their retention mission in fiscal year 2012 to avoid exceeding their congressionally mandated end strength limits. The active component achieved its fiscal year 2012 recruiting mission and accessed over 96 percent high school diploma graduates, with the lowest number of waivers and test category IV enlistments ever. The Total Army's percentage of new enlisted soldiers with a high school diploma was well above historic rates. Additionally, the Army achieved over 99 percent Military Occupational Specialty requirements. In addition, recruits scoring 50–99 percent on the Armed Forces Qualification Test exceeded the DOD standard of 60 percent, while recruits who scored in the lower range (30 percent and below) were at a record low in fiscal year 2012. We are currently on track to achieve the fiscal year 2013 recruiting mission, with the exception of the U.S. Army Reserve mission. However, a tougher recruiting environment and impacts of sequestration have already caused a decline in the fiscal year 2014 entry pool.

Upcoming reductions in Army operating budgets will likely have significant impact on recruiting operations. While the Army can mitigate many of the fiscal constraints by focusing cuts to preserve operational capabilities at the tactical level, the impact of reductions across multiple funding lines poses the greatest threat to the Army's ability to sustain the All-Volunteer Force.

In fiscal year 2012, Combined Active Army (AC) and Army Reserve component (RC) enlistment and reenlistment incentives totaled slightly over \$1.03 billion compared to \$1.23 billion in fiscal year 2011. Entering fiscal year 2013, the combined Active and Reserve components will spend slightly over \$1.009 billion: AC recruiting (\$237 million), AC retention (\$237 million); Army National Guard recruiting and re-

tention (\$348 million); USAR recruiting and retention (\$187 million). A large part of the fiscal year 2013 incentives budget is a result of obligations for enlistment bonuses occurring from fiscal years 2008–2011. As a result of lower recruiting missions and prior year success, the percentage of Army recruits receiving a bonus dropped from over 62 percent of all recruits in fiscal year 2009 to 3 percent in fiscal year 2013. Enlistment and reenlistment bonuses are only used to incentivize longer-term enlistments in a small percentage of critical skills. These incentives ensure the success of the total Army recruiting and retention missions and shape the force to meet specific grade and skill requirements. The amount budgeted for contractual payments is anticipated to decrease until at least fiscal year 2015.

Recruiting is expected to be more difficult in fiscal year 2014. The Army and the Nation still face challenges such as rising obesity rates as we recruit the All-Volunteer Force. In today's environment, fewer than one in four 17- to 24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army without a waiver. One in five youths age 12–19 are currently overweight, compared to 1 in 20 in the 1960s, and this trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015. More than 20 percent of high school students fail to graduate, a critical milestone in becoming competitive to serve in highly skilled positions.

In fiscal year 2012, the Active Army reenlisted 64,012 soldiers. The Army Reserve reenlisted 14,377 soldiers, exceeding their annual goal by 9 percent. The Army National Guard fell short of their mission, achieving 93 percent of their assigned mission, reenlisting 49,272 soldiers, again purposely under producing to avoid exceeding end strength limits.

During fiscal year 2012 and into fiscal year 2013, retention bonuses were carefully monitored and adjusted to ensure that the Army met its retention goals while remaining fiscally responsible. During fiscal year 2013, the Active component retention program is on track to successfully retain a quality force that supports Army end strength and readiness requirements. As we posture for future reductions in the size of our force, the Army is using lessons learned from past reductions to ensure that today's decisions maintain the viability of tomorrow's All-Volunteer Force. Retention policies will emphasize retention of soldiers with high potential coupled with appropriate force alignment and structure.

TRANSITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Our Nation entrusts its best and brightest to the Army to support the All-Volunteer Force. Therefore, the Army has a responsibility to help our transitioning personnel prepare for post-active duty life by providing the training and tools to enable their success. We must help them use their Army training, education and experience to successfully return to civilian life and to become gainfully employed. With thousands of soldiers possessing diverse skills, and scheduled to depart over the next few years, the Nation has a motivated, disciplined and work-ready force to employ. The redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP)—entitled “Transition GPS” (Goals, Plans, Succeed)—will assist our soldiers in understanding and communicating what great skills and abilities they do bring to our Nation's workforce. To be successful in their transition, we must provide the assistance, curriculum, training, skills building and tools our members need so they are prepared and most importantly, career ready to achieve their goals in civilian life. Transition GPS includes the following elements:

- **Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:** Through the new transition program, separating servicemembers will have a one-on-one counseling session to discuss their transition needs and goals. Each servicemember will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents their personal transition, as well as the deliverables they must attain to meet the new transition program's Career Readiness Standards.
- **5-Day Core Curriculum:** The 5-day Transition GPS Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the available veterans' benefits, and a redesigned employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning servicemembers will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations and credentials.
- **Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:** In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning servicemembers will also have the option of participating in a series of 2 day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing college education; (2) a Technical Training track, for those seeking to attend

technical school or earn a credential; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.

- **CAPSTONE Event:** At least 90 days before their separation from Military Service, servicemembers will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning servicemembers completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Servicemembers who require additional assistance will be referred to additional or remedial training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all servicemembers will be offered a “warm handover” to government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.
- **Military Life Cycle Transition Model:** The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a servicemember’s career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a servicemember’s lifecycle—near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier as a way to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages.

In December 2011, the Army published an execution order for transition policy which changed our program to a “Commander’s program” to ensure soldiers have their commander’s support and take advantage of transition services. We have established a Transition Strategic Outreach Office to synchronize job connection efforts between soldiers and industry. In November 2012, the Army implemented the “Veterans’ Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act” and has begun efforts to implement recommendations from the Veterans’ Employment Initiative Task Force. As part of this effort, the Army increased its ACAP counselor support within the Warrior Transition Command from 30 to 41 counselors. Through the revamped Transition Assistance Program, the Army is working to maximize job opportunities by leveraging private industry contacts and local governments to remove barriers to job-related licenses and certifications wherever possible.

To support these recent changes in legislation and policy, we reinforced the Army Career and Alumni Program (ACAP) and demobilization platforms with a total of nearly 700 contractors and civilian personnel comprised of transition and finance counselors, administrative support staff, and information technology support team. We established a new ACAP center in Kuwait. We have created 25 regionally-located transition support teams to support the USAR and ARNG in the soldiers’ hometowns. We plan to add 65 education counselors at the end of fiscal year 2013. The legislative and policy mandates present a 300 percent increase in participation and focus our program on compliance.

CIVILIAN WORKFORCE/END STRENGTH

Consistent with the reductions of our authorized end strength for active duty and the Army National Guard, we expect to reduce the civilian workforce from 272,000 to 255,000 by the end of fiscal year 2017. The rate of reductions for the civilian workforce will be based on the understanding that it will take 2–3 years after our troops redeploy from Afghanistan to adequately reset our personnel, families, and equipment.

To help mitigate the Army’s budget execution risks, on January 22, 2013, a hiring freeze went into effect. The memorandum that established the freeze also directed commanders to terminate temporary employees and to let the appointments of term employees lapse upon the expiration of their current appointments. To date, we have released over 1,800 temporary and term employees and expect to release a total of 3,100 by the end of this fiscal year.

Recognizing the inevitable risks of decreased civilian employee productivity and morale, we may need to furlough up to 250,000 civilian employees this fiscal year. In addition to the hardship the pay loss poses to our dedicated workforce, this furlough will have an immediate trickle-down effect as the majority of these civilians are located throughout the United States on our posts and stations, and their spending directly impacts local economies and contributes towards State and local taxes. Although we will endeavor to protect critical services as much as possible, any furlough will have an immediate impact on important Army services.

IMPLEMENTING THE ARMY TOTAL FORCE POLICY

Approved by the Secretary of the Army in September 2012, the Army Total Force Policy is an important milestone in our Army’s history because it lays out a roadmap for the full integration of our Active and Reserve component forces. The Active Army, the Army National Guard (ARNG), and the Army Reserve (USAR) each serve

vital roles in our National Security Strategy, and it is imperative that we use each component's strengths to accomplish the Army's missions in a time of fiscal constraint. The essence of the Total Force Policy is to manage risks by maintaining appropriate levels of readiness while balancing immediate response capabilities with operational and strategic depth.

The Total Force Policy establishes formal guidance for integrating the diverse regulations that govern how the Army mans, trains, equips, and sustains Active Army, Army National Guard, and Army Reserve Forces. To employ Active and Reserve component forces most efficiently, the Army will establish common standards for unit training and readiness validation; a common deployment period policy; standard procedures for mobilizing and deploying Reserve component forces using new activation authorities under title 10, 12304b, and will complete fielding of the Integrated Pay and Personnel System. The Army Total Force Policy will reshape the Army and ensure the Total Force provides the Nation the best balance of readiness and depth.

WOMEN IN THE ARMY

On January 24, 2013, the Secretary of Defense and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) eliminated the Direct Ground Combat Assignment Rule. While this resulted in all positions being opened to women, the Army must notify Congress through the CJCS and Office of the Secretary of Defense and complete the congressional notification period prior to recruiting, reclassifying or assigning women to these positions. There are significant documentation requirements as the Army proposes opening further positions and completes the required validation of occupational standards prior to January 1, 2016.

Female soldiers have demonstrated their ability to excel in combat over the last 10 years. The Army is committed to ensuring all soldiers have career opportunities that enable them to reach their highest potential without regard to gender. The expansion of opportunities for women will improve overall Army capability and readiness. With the removal of the collocation restrictions in fiscal year 2012, this enabled the Army to open an additional 13,139 positions and 6 additional military occupational specialties previously closed to women. Women may now serve in leadership positions previously closed to them; allowing them to be competitive with their male peers as they gain new experiences.

DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

The diversity of our Army is a continuous source of strength as we recruit soldiers and Army civilians from an increasingly diverse America. We must take full advantage of opportunities to bring new ideas and expanded capabilities to the mission by reaching out to diverse communities and building relationships that will support the Army's human resource requirements. To this end, we have developed and fully implemented a strategy for conducting outreach activities to our Nation's diverse communities on an Army-wide basis. In the first year of execution, 9 commands and the Army Staff coordinated 35 outreach events for the Total Army. We will continue to build on this strategy in the future.

Our ability to be inclusive of the Nation's diverse citizenry while sustaining a high performance Army requires the engagement of senior leaders and continuous diversity education throughout the Force. The Army Diversity Roadmap outlines a unique approach to an enterprise-wide diversity and inclusion initiative over the coming years and guides our actions in the areas of leadership, people, structure and resources, training and education, and inclusive work environments. Within the Roadmap, we are implementing an intra-Army council of senior leaders to advise the Secretary and provide a forum for collaboration and sharing ideas in connection with implementation of the Army Diversity Roadmap and execution of components of our strategy. In addition, the Council will facilitate delivering the diversity and inclusion message throughout the Army, while receiving direct feedback from senior leaders on recommended priorities and areas of emphasis.

Our initial diversity training and education efforts have focused on practitioners who support our commanders and other leaders. We continue to ensure high quality initial training for Military Equal Opportunity and Equal Employment Opportunity professionals. Over the past 4 years, over 600 general officers and civilian senior executives have completed a diversity education program that emphasizes inclusive leadership, self-awareness, leading change, and other topics that ensure a successful diversity and inclusion strategy for the Army. In this program senior leaders are presented with challenges and opportunities and participate in experiential exercises that enhance understanding and perspective.

We will continue to invest in diversity education and inclusive leadership by seamlessly integrating the training for senior leaders into their initial leader development programs. Ultimately, we will also reach every soldier and Army civilian through the Army's institutional professional development system.

We must position the Army to recruit, develop and retain the most talented people our Nation has to offer. Critical to our global mission is an understanding of the cultures, languages and social norms of the people in locations where we deploy as well as in our own ranks. This diversity and inclusion initiative is integral to the Army's long-term vision for human capital and our understanding of the human dimension of leadership and global engagements.

THE ARMY DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

Fiscal year 2012 was the first full year in which the Army used the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) Army-wide. Under IDES, the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) use a single set of general and specialty medical examinations and a single-source disability rating to execute their respective responsibilities. This results in more consistent, less contentious evaluations, faster fitness determinations, and timely benefits delivery for our medically retired or separated soldiers. As a result, the VA can deliver benefits in the shortest period allowed by law following discharge, thus reducing the "benefit gap" that previously existed under the legacy process. IDES also provides assistance to soldiers as they transition from the military to the services and benefits the VA offers, and has eliminated many of the sequential and duplicative processes found in our respective legacy systems.

The IDES has been strategically successful in reducing the post-separation benefit gap; however expansion of IDES across the Army has been challenging. Historically, several factors have hindered the processing of soldiers through the IDES, including: ineffective governance structure, inadequate capacity to meet demands, lack of standardization, and a lack of compliance with established policies and guidance.

Over the last year, the Army has devoted an extraordinary amount of time, attention, resources, and leadership to improve the IDES. In addition to adding staff to our Medical and Physical Evaluation Boards to support current operational demands, the VA and the Army have implemented a number of initiatives to improve the performance of IDES. These improvements have resulted in the following:

- Since February 2012, the Army has reduced the number of cases over 400 days by 24 percent.
- Over the last year, the Army increased its capacity from 1,200 to 3,000 cases per month. Consequently, Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) output has exceeded input for the last 8 months, and the MEDCOM reduced its inventory of MEB from over 5,000 to 2,300 cases.
- MEB output has exceeded input for the last 8 months; the average days to complete the MEB Phase have improved 46 percent from 146 days in March 2012 to 112 days at the end of February 2013. Time to complete the Narrative Summary (NARSUM) has improved from 51 days in March 2012 to 22 days in February 2013 (56 percent improvement).
- The Physical Evaluation Boards (PEBs) achieved DOD's 120-day goal for the last 4 months. The average number of days to complete the PEB Phase has also decreased from 126 days in March 2012 to 104 days at the end of February 2013, an 18 percent improvement.

Soldiers starting IDES today will complete the process in less than 295 days. With the added capacity and process improvements in place, the Army expects to meet the DOD's goal of completing 70 percent of AC cases in 295 days and RC cases in 305 days by January 2014. More importantly, we remain committed to making this process more accessible to our soldiers and their families.

READY AND RESILIENT CAMPAIGN

For the Army to continue to improve, and increase capability and performance, we must continue to build resilience in our total force. We have a historic opportunity to understand the lessons of the last 12 years and make our force even stronger. Thus on February 4, 2013, the Secretary of the Army issued a Directive requiring the Army to move forward with its Ready and Resilient Campaign (R2C) plan. The R2C will address the challenges that stress the Force, and integrate and synchronize the multiple efforts and programs designed to improve the readiness and resilience of soldiers (Active, Reserve, and National Guard), Army civilians, and their families.

The R2C is a far-reaching, comprehensive campaign, designed to enhance individual and collective resilience and improve readiness. This initiative will integrate

and synchronize existing and emerging Army programs that focus on improving physical, psychological and emotional health. The goal is to ensure that individuals understand and have access to effective programs and feel empowered to seek help if and when they need it; free from stigma related barriers.

The success of the Ready and Resilient Campaign depends on commanders and leaders at all levels acting with unity of effort and emphasizing the campaign's importance to sustaining Army readiness in the future. This campaign will guide the Army's efforts to build and maintain resilience across the Total Army to improve unit readiness and further reinforce the Army Profession. The Ready and Resilient Campaign Execution Order (EXORD) will follow the Campaign Plan with specific tasks and details for the execution of the campaign. We expect every leader to fully support the campaign by incorporating resilience training into all educational and professional development programs. Soldiers of all ranks must practice the skills that build resilience as part of our collective effort to build a strong Army team. Success will come from a cultural change in the Army by directly linking personal resilience to readiness and emphasizing the responsibility of personnel at all levels to build and maintain resilience.

HEALTH PROMOTION RISK REDUCTION AND SUICIDE PREVENTION

The Army continues to institute a multi-disciplinary, holistic approach to readiness and resilience and suicide prevention. Increased emphasis remains on developing and implementing targeted training programs as well as funding for support programs that impact the entire Army Family. This approach is also reflected in the various senior leader forums that are conducted throughout the Army: the Army Vice Chief of Staff-led Senior Suicide Review Group; the Health Promotion Risk Reduction Council; and the Community Health Promotion Councils at posts, camps, and stations.

Key elements of the Army's approach are: (1) Prompt access by soldiers to quality behavioral health care; (2) Multi-point screening and documentation of mild Traumatic Brain Injuries/Post-Traumatic Stress Disorders; (3) Improved leader and soldier awareness of high-risk behavior and intervention programs; and (4) Increased emphasis on programs that support Total Force (soldiers, Army civilians, and family members) readiness and resilience.

The Army had 324 potential suicides during 2012—the highest annual total on record. Of those, 184 deaths occurred within the AC and RC (Army National Guard [ARNG]/U.S. Army Reserve [USAR]) on Active Duty. This total exceeds the previous Active Duty high of 166 in 2009 and 2011. The RC not on Active Duty total of 140 is the second highest on record, exceeded only by the 2010 not on Active Duty total of 146. While most Army suicides continue to be among junior enlisted soldiers, the number of suicides by noncommissioned officers has increased over each of the last 3 years. By far, most Army suicides were in the 21–30 age range, a trend that held each year from 2010 to 2012.

In November 2012, the Army published the “2020 Army Strategy for Suicide Prevention” as Annex C of the “Headquarters Department of the Army (HQDA) EXORD 037–13, Ready and Resilient Quick Wins.” It is deliberately and closely synchronized with the “2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention” in order to promote coordinated implementation. It features four major lines of Effort: (1) Healthy and Empowered Individuals, Families, and Communities-Prevention; (2) Clinical and Community Support Services—Intervention; (3) Treatment and Recovery Services—Postvention; and (4) Surveillance, Research, and Evaluation. The references to Prevention, Intervention and Postvention tie the 2020 Army Strategy back to extensive work done over many preceding years, while at the same time it presents a forward-looking way-ahead in step with the National Strategy.

ARMY SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROGRAM

The Army Substance Abuse Program (ASAP) is a commander's program that uses prevention, education, deterrence, detection, and rehabilitation, to reduce and eliminate alcohol and drug abuse. It is based on the expectations of readiness and personal responsibility.

In March 2010, the Army conducted a counselor requirements analysis based on each installation's average daily client census with a ratio of one counselor for 30 patients. Patient caseload was as high as 60 patients per counselor at some installations. The Army has shifted to a 1:30 ratio as an acceptable ratio based on literature and counselor input. Applying this ratio yielded a requirement of 563 counselors assuming a 20 percent growth in number of patients over a 5 year period.

An Army priority in this area includes the hiring of more counselors. There is a finite pool of qualified substance abuse counselors nationwide and the Army is com-

peting for this scarce talent with private industry, the Veteran's Administration and State and local governments. As of March 20, 2013, the Army has hired 436 of the 563 counselors needed. The Army is increasing the use of recruiting, relocation, and student loan reimbursement incentives to attract more qualified candidates, and is developing a ASAP Counselor Internship Program which will allow students with Master's degrees to work in a supervised internship for up to 2 years as they obtain their licenses and substance abuse counselor certifications.

The Confidential Alcohol Treatment and Education Pilot began in July 2009 and offers confidential alcohol treatment and education to eligible soldiers. This pilot was initially offered at Fort Lewis, Fort Richardson, and Schofield Barracks. The Secretary of the Army directed that the pilot be expanded to include Forts Carson, Riley, and Leonard Wood with successful treatment outcomes at these sites.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT/ASSAULT RESPONSE AND PREVENTION PROGRAM

Over the last year, the Army made great strides to institutionalize our Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention (SHARP) Program to enable Army readiness, combat sexual violence and reinforce the Army's commitment to create a climate where soldiers live the Army Values, thereby eliminating sexual assault and sexual harassment.

As we assess our efforts, results from our recent Operational Troop Survey indicate a significant increase (28 percent in 2009 to 42 percent in 2012) of female soldier survey respondents who indicated they experienced a sexual assault and reported the crime. This increase in soldiers propensity to report this crime is critical to ensure commanders can provide support to survivors, take appropriate action against offenders, and effectively address command safety issues.

The Army's goal is to eliminate sexual violence through cultural change, thereby, creating a professional climate where every member of the Army family (soldiers, civilians, and family members) trusts their leaders to treat them with dignity and respect. The Army is aggressively pursuing this goal through the integration of policies, training, communication and a unity-of-command approach to our sexual harassment and sexual assault response and prevention efforts.

Highly trained SHARP staff are key to achieving SHARP goals. The Army trained approximately 19,000 command-selected program personnel on a prevention-focused 80-hour program certification course. The Army is institutionalizing this training at the command level by establishing 73 full-time SHARP 80-hour certification course trainer positions within our Active and Reserve components. The Army is aggressively pursuing DOD certification of more than 10,000 SHARP personnel by the end of fiscal year 2013.

The Army also continues to expand our SHARP Life-Cycle Training. The training is designed to improve the capabilities of our force to address sexual assault at every level of career progression.

While the primary objective is prevention, when an incident occurs, the Army is committed to providing the best possible support and protection of the survivor through our advocacy efforts. In 2012, the Army implemented the requirement to have two full-time program personnel to serve as Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARC) and Victim Advocates (VA) at brigade and equivalent units. To institutionalize these efforts, the Army is resourcing 829 military and civilian full-time SARC and VA positions at AC/RC brigade and equivalent units and thousands of collateral positions at battalions and below.

In 2012, the Army began executing its executive agent role to train military investigators/prosecutors from all Services at the U.S. Army Military Police School 80-hour Special Victim Unit Investigation Course. The course includes the groundbreaking Forensic Experiential Trauma Interview technique developed by the Army. This interviewing technique reduces the survivor's risk of re-traumatization during interviews and produces stronger case evidence.

DON'T ASK, DON'T TELL REPEAL/EXTENDING BENEFITS TO SAME SEX PARTNERS

The Army, in coordination with the DOD, is proceeding with the planning necessary to implement the extension of benefits to same sex domestic partners.

With the repeal of "Don't Ask Don't Tell," discrimination based on sexual orientation no longer has a place in the military. All soldiers who serve our Nation deserve to be treated with equal dignity and respect. As such, on February 11, 2013, the Secretary of Defense, directed the Services to develop plans to extend family member and dependent benefits that can be lawfully provided to the same-sex domestic partners of military servicemembers and their children.

These 22 family member and dependent benefits identified by the Joint Benefits Review Working Group require policy revisions, training, and technical upgrades to

our automated personnel identification system. However, the Army will be ready to make these benefits available to same-sex domestic partners by August 31, 2013 as directed by the Secretary of Defense.

While our work is focused on changing our policies and practices in accordance with current law to ensure fair and equal treatment of all our members and their families, we will ensure we implement this change in the same disciplined manner that has characterized the Army's service for the past 237 years.

CONGRESSIONAL ASSISTANCE

As the Army continues the deliberate and methodical reductions in the force, we will need congressional support to drawdown accurately and efficiently while maintaining readiness. The Army will maximize voluntary measures, but will need congressional support as it resorts to inevitable involuntary measures in the coming fiscal year. The continued support of Congress for competitive military benefits and compensation, along with incentives and bonuses for soldiers will remain critical to the All-Volunteer Army's efforts to recruit, retain, and support the highest caliber of individuals. The Army must retain the flexibility to offer incentives to attract and retain talent. The continued funding of these programs by Congress is absolutely critical. These incentives assist in shaping the force for both quality and specific talent required. Finally, predictability in the authorization and appropriation bills that are aligned with the President's budget request would help the Army tremendously in preparations for the force of the future.

CONCLUSION

We have invested a tremendous amount of resources and deliberate planning to develop and preserve the All-Volunteer Force. People are the Army, and our enduring priority is to preserve the high quality, All-Volunteer Force—the essential element of our strength.

While we transform to a smaller Army, we remain dedicated to improving readiness, and building resilience in our soldiers, civilians, and their families. The Army will not sacrifice readiness as it draws down. We must draw down wisely to preserve the health of the force and prevent breaking faith with the brave men and women who serve our Nation. The Army has gained the trust of the American public more now than at any other time in recent history, while fulfilling our responsibilities toward those who serve.

The well-being of our force, regardless of its size, is absolutely dependent upon your tremendous support. The Army is proud of the high caliber men and women whose willingness to serve, is a credit to this great nation. To conclude, we wish to thank all of you for your continued support, which has been vital in sustaining our All-Volunteer Army through an unprecedented period of continuous combat operations and will continue to be vital to ensure the future of our Army.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and members of the subcommittee, we thank you again for your generous and unwavering support of our outstanding soldiers, civilian professionals, and their families.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.
Secretary Garcia?

STATEMENT OF HON. JUAN M. GARCIA III, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE NAVY FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the Department of the Navy's personnel programs, about the sailors, the marines, and the civilians who comprise the Navy.

There have been several significant and successful changes in the Navy in personnel policies and programs since we last testified before this subcommittee. In accordance with the January 24, 2013 Secretary of Defense memorandum entitled "Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition Assignment Rule," we will submit the Navy-Marine Corps implementation plans next month to the Secretary of Defense. These plans will provide details on how

we intend to move forward with our expansion of opportunities for females to serve in previously closed Military Occupational Specialties (MOSs), ground combat units, and those positions closed due to privacy and berthing restrictions.

We have made great strides by opening positions on submarines and assigning women to previously closed ground combat units at the battalion level. We continue to offer the opportunity for female lieutenants to volunteer for training at the Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course immediately following graduation from The Basic School. We are committed to providing women with the same opportunities as their male counterparts while maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities.

The Navy is supporting ongoing efforts by DOD to review and extend benefits, including compensation benefits, to same sex domestic partners of servicemembers. Many benefits are currently available to same sex domestic partners by designation of servicemembers. At the direction of the President, DOD established a Joint Benefits Review (JBR) Working Group, comprised of representatives from each of the Services. The JBR's mission is to conduct a careful and deliberative review of the benefits currently provided to the families of servicemembers.

The working group has identified 22 additional family well-being, child and youth programs, family support, travel and transportation, and survivor and death benefits that can be lawfully provided to the same sex domestic partners of servicemembers and their families through changes to DOD policies and regulations. On February 11, 2013, then Secretary of Defense Panetta directed the extension of those benefits to same sex domestic partners and their children once the servicemembers and their same sex partners sign declarations attesting to the existence of a committed relationship.

Implementation of these benefit changes requires substantial policy revision, training, and technical upgrades. The Department of the Navy will extend the 22 additional family member and dependent benefits to eligible partners of the servicemembers no later than October 1 of this year, subject to approval by the Secretary of Defense. Meanwhile, the Department will continue to comply with existing law and will review the extension of military benefits in conjunction with OSD and other Services should a change in law occur.

In addition to ensuring our manpower and personnel policies meet our country's security requirements, it is my honor and privilege to represent and advocate for the more than 800,000 sailors, marines, and civilian teammates who are always prepared to respond to whatever our Nation needs. Vice Admiral Van Buskirk and Lieutenant General Milstead will have the opportunity to address their respective Services' personnel plans in detail, but I would like to touch on some common challenges the Navy faces as a whole.

After more than a decade of war and given the challenges in the broader economy, we must honor our commitment to veterans and wounded warriors by taking concrete steps to facilitate their transition to civilian life. A key achievement over the last year is the progress made with regard to transition support and reintegration.

In fiscal year 2012, the Navy hired 10,867 veterans into civilian positions. Fifty-nine percent of those were new hires. Of these, nearly one-quarter were disabled veterans and 1 in 10 was a wounded warrior.

The Navy has just over 200,000 U.S. direct hire civilians as of December. Veterans, including wounded warriors and disabled veterans, comprise a majority of our civilian workforce. Civilians operate across a broad spectrum of 558 occupations to include world class scientists and researchers who develop and procure cutting-edge weapons and equipment. More than half of the civilian workforce is made up of technical professionals, such as engineers, logisticians, mathematicians, scientists, acquisition specialists, and members of the medical community.

Because of the combination of sequestration and the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution, Navy commands have been operating under an across-the-board civilian hiring freeze to reduce spending, primarily in the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts, since January. Fortunately, the Marine Corps has been able to avoid so drastic a measure. Sustained execution of a hiring freeze simply hampers the Navy's ability to recruit a skilled and talented workforce capable of executing the mission. Critical gaps created by ongoing vacancies affect the Navy's readiness and could negatively impact execution for many months to come.

Our Department level sexual assault prevention strategy since 2009 has had three main components, each of which has shown progress during fiscal years 2012 and 2013. I know we will have a chance to address those.

From suicide reduction to sexual assault prevention and response, the Navy's 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is addressing head-on the critical and urgent issues facing our sailors, marines, and their families. As part of our aggressive drug demand reduction efforts, we have expanded our drug testing panel to include synthetics, like spice. We have also ended discount subsidies on the sale of tobacco products in our Navy and Marine Corps exchanges, while providing no cost tobacco cessation products for those trying to quit, and improved education and training programs to steer potential new consumers away from starting.

In short, the 21st Century Initiative is providing the tools needed to face challenges through a variety of programs aimed at fostering a healthy lifestyle both on and off duty. We are committed to continuing these efforts to ensure a safe, healthy, resilient, and ready force.

I wish to thank the committee members for your continued and unwavering support to the Navy, Marine Corps, and the men and women who are sailors and marines, who serve bravely in Afghanistan, spend months at sea apart from their families, guard embassies throughout the world, conduct humanitarian assistance missions whenever and wherever needed, and perform countless other missions under often unimaginably demanding conditions and circumstances.

We look forward to your questions. Thank you.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Garcia, Vice Admiral Van Buskirk, and Lieutenant General Milstead follows:]

PREPARED JOINT STATEMENT BY HON. JUAN M. GARCIA, VADM SCOTT R. VAN
BUSKIRK, USN, AND LT. GEN. ROBERT E. MILSTEAD, JR., USMC

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Department of the Navy's fiscal year 2014 manpower and personnel budget request appropriately balances risk in supporting the readiness requirements of the fleet and providing for the care and compensation of our sailors and marines. Our active budget request will support active end-strength of 323,600 within the Navy and 182,100 within the Marine Corps (190,200 with Overseas Contingency Operations support) and a Reserve end strength of 59,100 within the Navy and 39,600 within the Marine Corps.

Personnel Efficiencies

The overall pressure on the budget and the need for efficiency made achieving an appropriate balance between resources and requirements particularly difficult this year. The pay raises and changes in TRICARE fees for fiscal year 2014 and across the Future Years Defense Program (FYDP) represent the Department's best effort to balance personnel requirements, budget realities, and the welfare of our servicemembers and retirees. Because the increases in base pay are more modest than those of recent years, funding of special pays and bonuses will be particularly important. In addition, the budget includes increases for Basic Allowance for Housing (4.2 percent) and Basic Allowance for Subsistence (3.4 percent). As indicators of an improving economy emerge, we are closely monitoring for any downward trend in recruiting and retention. Meanwhile certain critical skills and positions remain difficult to fill.

Sailor, Marine, and Family Care

In fiscal year 2014 our team of dedicated family readiness professionals will continue to respond with agility to the needs of sailors, marines, and their families. Our goal is to address the needs of individual service and family members while also providing for the family unit as a whole. Technology, such as handheld applications and more sophisticated tools like eMarine, provides a wide range of communication capabilities. By providing information for self-help and education electronically, these tools enable our staff to focus their efforts on providing face-to-face interaction when and where it is needed the most. In addition, the Department continues to support vital programs such as the Military Spouse Employment Partnership, both as a resource for our members' spouses and as an employer, and the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, a popular and proven reintegration tool.

Recruiting

Both the Navy and Marine Corps continue to experience strong performance in our recruiting programs across both the officer and enlisted force. Accordingly, both Services' fiscal year 2014 budget requests for accession bonuses represent reductions from fiscal year 2013. However, accession bonuses remain critical to achieving our goals for certain hard to fill positions such as health professionals, nuclear operators, and special warfare/special operations in both the Active and Reserve components and Unrestricted Line officers in the Navy Reserve component.

Retention

The overall economic conditions, particularly with the improving but still weak civilian job market, contribute to the Navy and Marine Corps having had considerable success with retention across the force. As a result, bonuses and special pays have been reduced significantly in recent years. While we continue to make selected reductions in bonuses and special pays paid to sailors and marines, these highly targeted forms of compensation remain crucial to filling critical skill areas. In many cases these skill areas require significant investments in training and education and civilian demand for people with these skills remains strong despite the overall economic environment.

Transition Support

While higher than normal unemployment in the civilian sector makes it easier to meet our retention goals, it also makes it more difficult for those who leave the military to find a job. In fiscal year 2012, the Department of Navy spent nearly \$344 million on unemployment benefits for those who left active service. While the unemployment rate for veterans is lower than the national average, and the vast majority of our veterans do find civilian employment, it is taking many of them too long to do so. The newly redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP)—entitled "Transition GPS" (Goals, Plans, Succeed)—is intended to prepare sailors and marines to

make a successful transition from military to civilian life and help shorten their time to post-service employment. Transition GPS includes the following elements:

- **Pre-Separation Assessment and Individual Counseling:** Through the new transition program, separating servicemembers will have a one-on-one counseling session to discuss their transition needs and goals. Each servicemember will develop an Individual Transition Plan that documents their personal transition, as well as the deliverables they must attain to meet the new transition program's Career Readiness Standards.
- **5-Day Core Curriculum:** The 5 day Transition GPS Core Curriculum will include a financial planning seminar, a workshop offered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the available veterans' benefits, and a re-designed employment workshop offered by the Department of Labor. Transitioning servicemembers will also undertake a Military Occupational Code Crosswalk to translate their military skills, training, and experience into civilian occupations and credentials.
- **Career-Specific Additional Curriculum:** In addition to completing the Transition GPS Core Curriculum, transitioning servicemembers will also have the option of participating in a series of 2 day tailored tracks within the Transition GPS curriculum: (1) an Education track, for those pursuing college education; (2) a Technical Training track, for those seeking to attend technical school or earn a credential; and (3) an Entrepreneurship track, for those wanting to start a business.
- **CAPSTONE Event:** At least 90 days before their separation from Military Service, servicemembers will participate in a CAPSTONE event, which will verify that transitioning servicemembers completed the Transition GPS curriculum and achieved Career Readiness Standards. Servicemembers who require additional assistance will be referred to additional or remedial training opportunities. In addition, through the CAPSTONE event, all servicemembers will be offered a "warm handover" to government agencies and organizations that will be able to provide them continued benefits, services, and support as veterans.
- **Military Life Cycle Transition Model:** The new transition program will incorporate career readiness and transition preparation into the entire span of a servicemember's career. In the past, transition and preparation for the civilian workforce occurred late in a servicemember's lifecycle—near the point of separation. Under this new program, these concepts will be incorporated earlier as a way to ensure that the counseling, assessments, and access to resources to build skills or credentials occur at earlier stages.

Chairman Gillibrand, Senator Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to speak about the Department of the Navy's personnel programs and about the sailors, marines, and civilians who comprise the Department of the Navy.

There have been many significant and successful changes in the Department of the Navy personnel policies and programs since I testified before you last spring.

In accordance with the January 24, 2013, Secretary of Defense Memorandum, "Elimination of the 1994 Direct Ground Combat Definition and Assignment Rule," we will submit the Navy and Marine Corps implementation plans in May to the Secretary of Defense. These plans will provide details on how we intend to move forward with our expansion of opportunities for females to serve in previously closed Military Occupation Specialties (MOS), ground combat units, and those positions closed due to privacy and berthing restrictions. We have made great strides by opening positions on submarines and assigning women to previously closed ground combat units at the battalion level. We continue to offer the opportunity for female lieutenants to volunteer for training at the Marine Corps Infantry Officer Course immediately following graduation from The Basic School. We are committed to providing women with the same opportunities as their male counterparts while maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities.

The Department of the Navy is supporting ongoing efforts by the Department of Defense to review and extend benefits, including compensation benefits, to same-sex domestic partners of servicemembers. Many benefits are currently available to same sex domestic partners by designation of servicemembers. At the direction of the President, the Department of Defense established a Joint Benefits Review (JBR) working group. Comprised of representatives from all the Services, the JBR's mission is to conduct a careful and deliberative review of the benefits currently provided to the families of servicemembers. The working group has identified 22 addi-

tional family well-being, child and youth program, family support, travel and transportation, and survivor and death benefits that can be lawfully provided to the same-sex domestic partners of servicemembers and their families through changes to Department of Defense policies and regulations. On February 11, 2013, then-Secretary of Defense Panetta directed the extension of these benefits to same-sex domestic partners and their children once the servicemembers and their same-sex domestic partners sign declarations attesting to the existence of their committed relationship.

Implementation of these benefit changes requires substantial policy revision, training, and technical upgrades. The Department of the Navy will extend the 22 additional family member and dependent benefits to eligible same-sex domestic partners of servicemembers no later than October 1, 2013, subject to approval by the Secretary of Defense. Meanwhile, the Department of the Navy will continue to comply with existing law and will review the extension of military benefits in conjunction with OSD and the other services should a change in law occur.

In addition to ensuring our manpower and personnel policies meet our country's security requirements, it is my honor and privilege to represent and advocate for the more than 800,000 sailors, marines, and civilian employees who are always prepared to respond to whatever our Nation demands.

Vice Admiral Van Buskirk and Lieutenant General Milstead will address their respective Service's personnel plans in detail, but I would like to touch on some common challenges the Department of the Navy faces as a whole.

Last March, the Secretary of the Navy unveiled the 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative which is designed to place an increased focus on the resiliency and fitness of our servicemembers. With so much of our new defense strategy dependent upon the Navy and Marine Corps, we must ensure that our resources support the most combat effective and the most resilient force in our history. We set high standards and provide individuals with the services and training needed to meet those standards.

Aligned with the Defense Strategic Guidance's direction to maintain a ready and capable force, the 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is designed to maximize sailor and marine personal readiness, to maintain the resiliency of the force, and to hone the most combat effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy. The 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative consists of five basic "pillars": Readiness, Safety, Physical Fitness, Inclusion, and Continuum of Service. Our intention is to maximize sailor and marine personal readiness and resilience by concentrating on all five pillars.

The Navy will continue to provide a well-trained, healthy force in order to maximize our greatest military advantage and the bedrock of our Navy and Marine Corps—our sailors and marines. To accomplish this, our leadership team will do all we can to provide each member with the resources needed to maintain resiliency. The Navy will continue efforts to reduce suicides, curb alcohol abuse, deter the illegal use and misuse of drugs—including emerging synthetic drugs and prescription drugs, prevent sexual assaults, improve motorcycle safety, move to a culture of physical readiness, offer healthful and nutritious dining options, expand diversity (ideas, expertise and backgrounds) and provide tools for life after military service.

After more than a decade of war, and given the challenges in the broader economy, we must honor our commitment to veterans and Wounded Warriors by taking concrete steps to facilitate their transition to civilian life. A key achievement over the last year is the progress made with regard to transition support and reintegration. In fiscal year 2012, The Department of the Navy hired 10,867 veterans into civilian positions (59 percent of new hires). Of these, nearly one-quarter (2,540) were disabled veterans and 1-in-10 was a Wounded Warrior.

The Department of the Navy has just over 200,000 U.S. direct hire civilians as of December 2012. Veterans, including wounded warriors and disabled veterans, comprise a majority of our civilian workforce. The Navy civilians operate across a broad spectrum of 558 occupations, to include world-class scientists and researchers who develop and procure cutting-edge weapons and equipment. More than half of the civilian workforce is made up of technical professionals such as engineers, logisticians, mathematicians, scientists, acquisition specialists, and members of the medical community.

Because of the combination of sequestration and the fiscal year 2013 continuing resolution, Navy Commands have been operating under an across-the-board civilian hiring freeze to reduce spending, primarily in the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts, since January. Fortunately, the Marine Corps has been able to avoid so drastic a measure. Sustained execution of a hiring freeze severely hampers the Navy's ability to recruit a skilled and talented workforce capable of executing

its mission. Critical gaps created by ongoing vacancies affect the Navy's readiness and could negatively impact execution for many months to come.

One consequence of the hiring freeze is a significant reduction in our hiring of veterans and Wounded Warriors. The number of veterans hired in February 2013 totaled only 355, compared to 925 in December 2012. Similarly, the numbers of Wounded Warriors and disabled veterans brought onboard in February dropped to 97, a sharp decrease from the 306 in December.

Additionally, the sequestration required DOD to consider furloughing civilian personnel. The reduction in pay associated with furloughs, in conjunction with the hiring freeze, could severely impact our ability to attract and/or retain employees in our mission critical occupations.

The Navy views civilian furloughs as an option of last resort. Our civilian employees are absolutely critical to the Navy and Marine Corps team that is more than 10 years into the longest sustained period of combat operations in American history. Our civilians have responded to the increased operational tempo of the last decade, but the impact of a furlough, combined with continued pay freezes, may severely damage morale and retention. This proposed civilian furlough affects all levels of the department, from blue collar workers to members of the Senior Executive Service. Exceptions are extremely rare, largely limited to those deployed in a combat zone; those responsible for safety of life and property (mostly police, fire fighters, and nuclear accident responders); those who provide 24-hour inpatient and emergency care; those funded by the Foreign Military Sales trust fund; and civilian mariners at sea. DOD has also exempted foreign nationals, select child care employees and non-appropriated-fund employees. As it currently stands, mid-June is the earliest possible date for a civilian furlough. We continue to prepare our employees and our Commands for the impact this would have on our operations.

Another topic of special concern is sexual assault and prevention. Both the CNO and the CMC have clearly made these issues a high priority for senior leaders. The Marine Corps instituted the Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Campaign Plan 2012, and the Navy focused on improving the victim support process. We hold ourselves to a high standard of conduct and we will not tolerate sexual assaults within our ranks.

The Department of the Navy is committed to a Department-wide culture of gender respect where sexual assault is completely eliminated and never tolerated, and where sexual assault victims receive compassionate and coordinated support. This ongoing effort is a top priority of the Department and its two Services—the Navy and the Marine Corps. There are challenges yet to overcome, but we have accomplished much.

Our Department-level sexual assault prevention strategy since 2009 has had three main components, each of which has shown progress during fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013. The first involves the progressive dissemination of a clear, consistent, top-down leadership message that sexual assault is never acceptable anywhere in the Department of the Navy, and that all sailors and marines have shared responsibilities for their own behavior and for protecting each other from sexual assault. The second component involves the broad application of updated Service-wide training tools across the Navy and Marine Corps. Influencing the attitudes and behaviors of young sailors and marines requires their repeated exposure to training that is informative, relevant, and pertinent to them. Our third strategy component involves testing new initiatives to determine their efficacy in actually preventing sexual assaults. Experience at the Navy's Training Support Command Great Lakes has been very encouraging, and we are working to distill the key insights from numerous simultaneous initiatives there, and to apply the more effective ones elsewhere. Underlying all of these concepts is our commitment to candid self-assessment using insights from anonymous surveys, sexual assault case reviews, and site visits to Navy and Marine Corps locations worldwide. Our tactical objective is to reduce the number of sexual assaults involving sailors or marines with a special focus on preventing the most egregious forms of sexual assault.

During fiscal year 2012, both Services deployed innovative new sexual assault prevention training tools. At the Department level, we distributed over 15,000 copies of a newly-published Commander's Guide containing information on departmental priorities, background data, and specific suggestions on the management of sexual assault cases. We also fielded half-day leadership programs at eight concentration sites of Navy and Marine Corps operational forces in the United States and abroad. Each session combined summaries of Departmental insights and priorities, along with presentations by an outside civilian expert with unique experience in sexual assault criminal investigations and offender profiling. A separate, live-acted, vignette-based educational program, which emphasized the importance of bystander intervention in preventing sexual assault, was presented simultaneously to

packed theaters of sailors and marines. In addition, work is nearing completion on a professionally produced Department-level sexual assault prevention and response (SAPR) training video suitable for Department-wide use and focused on educating and orienting Navy civilians.

The Navy leadership has worked with both Services to improve sexual assault victim support services. In addition to coordinating Service-level strategies for implementing new requirements established in NDAA 2012 for full-time victim advocates and sexual assault response coordinators, the Under Secretary of the Navy worked directly with the Naval Audit Service and Navy-SAPRO to assess the responsiveness of 24/7 telephone access to SAPR services for sexual assault victims. The result has been a dramatic improvement in performance and the establishment of formal Navy standards. In another area, the Department partnered during fiscal year 2012 with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to develop a DOJ grant project to explore the efficacy of tele-medicine support for Sexual Assault Forensic Exams at remote sites. The Department of the Navy is the only Military Department engaged with DOJ in this effort, and our insights have helped shape the focus of ongoing project development.

From suicide reduction to sexual assault prevention and response, the Department of the Navy's 21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative is addressing, head on, the critical and urgent issues facing our sailors, marines, and their families. As part of our aggressive drug demand reduction efforts, we have expanded our drug-testing panel to include synthetics like "Spice". We have also ended discount "subsidies" on the sale of tobacco products in our Navy and Marine Corps Exchanges while providing no-cost tobacco cessation products for those trying to quit and improving education and training programs to steer potential new consumers away from ever starting. In short, the 21st Century Initiative is providing the tools needed to face challenges through a variety of programs aimed at fostering a healthy lifestyle, both on and off duty. We commit to continue these efforts to ensure a safe, healthy, resilient and ready force.

The budget process requires a careful balancing of resources and assessment of risk. The President's fiscal year 2014 budget and the Future Years Defense Program are the results of difficult decisions and tradeoffs. The final product meets mission requirements while providing appropriate compensation and benefits for our Active Duty, Reserves, civilian employees, and military retirees.

In response to the newly enacted requirement to "establish policies and procedures for determining the most appropriate and cost efficient mix of military, civilian, and contractor personnel to perform the mission of the Department of Defense" contained in Section 931 of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2012, the Department of the Navy has established the Total Force Integration Board (TFIB), which I chair. The TFIB serves as the principal forum for Total Force Planning and Management efforts, including determination of optimal workforce mix across the Navy enterprise. Additionally, as of September 2012, the Department of the Navy has implemented the Contractor Manpower Reporting Application (CMRA) which provides for the identification of Service contracts and labor hours expended within the Navy as reported by the contractors. These data will be aggregated and reported to Congress beginning in fiscal year 2014. The application is modeled after the Army's version of CMRA and may eventually transition to an enterprise-wide version of CMRA at the OSD level.

Both Sea Services will strive to meet their operational requirements with as efficient a force as possible. For the Navy this means continuing to move sailors from shore support functions to sea duty to enhance operational readiness. Such a shift means not only fewer sailors available for mission critical work ashore, but also that sailors will, on average, spend more time at sea away from their families. For the marines, the reduction of nearly 20,000 end strength coincides with the planned withdrawal from Afghanistan, but will require careful balancing to maintain the right mix of seniority and specialties.

Our highest priority remains the care and the recovery of our wounded, ill, and injured servicemembers. The Department of the Navy is leading the way in innovative therapeutic treatments of our wounded warriors and these efforts include our continued focus and research in the areas of traumatic brain injury (TBI) and post-traumatic stress disorder. The Navy is collaborating with the other Services, our Centers of Excellence, the Veterans Administration, and leading research and academic centers. We continue to make progress but recognize there is more work ahead in this area.

We continue to search for innovative ways to improve the efficiency and capability of our forces as well as the quality of life of our members and their families. The Navy is actively preparing for the congressionally-created commission on military

compensation and hopes for increased flexibility to meet our requirements with both efficiency and fairness to our members and retirees.

We wish to thank the committee members for your continuous and unwavering commitment to support the Navy and Marine Corps and the men and women who, as sailors and marines, serve bravely in Afghanistan, spend months at sea apart from their families, guard embassies throughout the world, conduct humanitarian missions whenever and wherever needed, and perform countless other missions, often under unimaginably demanding conditions and circumstances.

The following service specific information is provided for the committee. We look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Vice Admiral Van Buskirk follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY VADM SCOTT R. VAN BUSKIRK, USN

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, I am honored to appear before you today to review Navy manpower, personnel, training, education and family support programs and priorities for fiscal year 2014.

These are clearly challenging times for all of us. With budget concerns continuing and the pressures of increased OPTEMPO we are asking sailors to do more than ever before. Navy has had to make tough and sometimes unpopular decisions; however, we remain committed to supporting sailors and their families through this challenging time. While we have planned for, and are executing, prudent reductions; the majority of the impacts will not take effect until this summer. My primary concern is the potential for a slowdown in training and impacts on recruiting our future force, resulting in reduced manning and quality of our deployable forces. Our sequestration planning specifically attempted to avoid training and recruiting impacts; however, the depth and prevalence of reductions, increase the probability of an unintended training slowdown and challenge in accessing quality recruits.

II. A READY AND CAPABLE GLOBAL NAVY

In the past year, since assuming duties as Chief of Naval Personnel and Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Manpower, Personnel, Training, and Education), I have had the opportunity to observe and assess where the Navy is and where it needs to go within the manpower, personnel, training, and education domain. Navy is America's away team—relevant and in demand—for peace keeping duties and power projection. As we expand America's focus in the Pacific Theater, Navy assumes an increasingly critical role in the Defense Strategic Guidance. As we work to achieve the Chief of Naval Operations' tenets of Warfighting First, Operate Forward, and Be Ready, I have established as my three strategic priorities, Responsive Force Management, Effective Personnel Readiness and Sound Organizational Management.

Responsive Force Management:

We must maintain forward progress to properly man the fleet with trained and experienced sailors. This begins with attracting the most qualified youth of America to serve in the Navy by demonstrating the many opportunities and rewards associated with naval service, and appealing to their pride in our Nation, commitment to its ideals, and devotion to protecting its freedoms. It continues with providing world-class training and education opportunities to prepare them to excel in maritime-centric jobs in an increasingly technical fleet comprised of fewer and less manpower-intensive platforms and weapon systems.

Effective Personnel Readiness:

We must capitalize on investments in sailors, both officer and enlisted, by providing the incentives needed to retain the best and to achieve and sustain optimum fleet readiness. Compensation remains an important part of our incentives system but is only a part of what we must do to preserve the world's best All-Volunteer Force. We must continue to offer the best training available and provide opportunities for off-duty education to enhance the force and help our people meet their education goals. Highly educated sailors are our best performers and tend to stay in the Navy making them key to Navy's success. We must continue to build resiliency among sailors and their families. We ask much of our men and women in uniform and those who support them at home. We owe them the tools to help them endure and thrive in challenging environments and under demanding circumstances.

Sound Organizational Alignment:

The fleet is our primary customer and we must ensure that every decision and action supports the needs of the fleet and its sailors. Shortly after assuming the helm as Chief of Naval Operations, Admiral Greenert issued direction to optimally position his headquarters staff to meet the demand signals provided by fleet and combatant commanders. We continue to evaluate our effectiveness in delivering what the fleet requires and to ensure that we align ourselves to be on time and within budget. We must ensure effective coordination and communications among major headquarter organizations, fleet and shore commands, and our support organizations, to deliver the best possible services to sailors and their families in all areas of Navy manpower, personnel, training, and education.

In addition to these three strategic priorities, my primary mission objectives are to effectively Stabilize, Balance and Distribute the force. Since the mid-1990s, Navy end strength has trended downward, consistent with manpower needs dictated by a decreasing force structure and, more recently, withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan. However, beginning in fiscal year 2013, we began a period of slow growth to stabilize the force, increase manning at sea, improve sea/shore flow and increase the Navy's Cyber capabilities. As we worked to determine the proper force size, we conducted a requirements-based process to properly balance the force in size, seniority, and skill mix, and to enhance capabilities to better distribute qualified personnel to the right places at the right time. This set the stage for long-term force stabilization while maintaining effective personnel readiness.

To stabilize, balance, and distribute the force, it is essential that sailors are assignable, deployable, and distributable. Given the demands placed on our people over the past decade, including the stresses of war and high operational tempo, we have placed unprecedented emphasis on force resiliency. Fit and resilient sailors are critical to Navy readiness. We must continue to bolster Navy families to meet the demands we place on them; the 21st century sailor initiatives provide the priority and resources necessary to permit sailors to achieve excellence while instilling confidence through our unwavering commitment to them and their families. It is imperative that we continue to commit resources toward programs that build force resiliency.

III. RESPONSIVE FORCE MANAGEMENT

Responsive Force Management strategic priorities are focused on end strength, compensation, fleet manning, retention, recruiting, and training throughput.

Stabilize End Strength:

The President's fiscal year 2014 budget request supports active end strength of 323,600, and selected Reserve end strength of 59,100. The request seeks \$27.8 billion in Military Personnel, Navy (MPN) appropriations, and \$1.8 billion in related Operation and Maintenance, Navy (O&MN), appropriations. The request includes \$1.9 billion for Reserve Personnel, Navy (RPN) and \$24.9 million in related Operation and Maintenance, Navy Reserve (O&MNR) appropriations.

Navy has invested in additional strength to help reduce manning gaps at sea, while concurrently restoring targeted shore billets to provide adequate shore rotational assignments for sailors in sea-intensive ratings, and at regional maintenance centers and afloat training groups. These additional billets will not only help improve sea/shore flow, they will develop additional trained sailors with advanced maintenance skills while on shore duty, who will return to sea better prepared to make an immediate technical contribution to their commands. In the near-term, we are also increasing strength among junior officers in the surface and submarine warfare communities to meet future department head requirements. Our budget request appropriately balances risk, preserves capabilities to meet current fleet and joint requirements, fosters growth in emerging mission areas, and provides vital support to sailors and Navy families, as we carefully monitor personnel and fleet readiness. We are also applying and adjusting force management tools to retain the right skills, pay grade, and experience-mix necessary to provide mission-ready naval forces. End strength continues to grow across the Future Years Defense Program until it stabilizes at approximately 326,100 in fiscal year 2018.

We are carefully managing reduction of over 3,000 positions from the Reserve billet base, to 59,100 end strength. These adjustments align the Selected Reserve with post Operation Enduring Freedom requirements, reconfiguration of the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, and the new Defense Strategy, while retaining capabilities vital to fulfilling the Reserve component role in Navy's Total Force mission. By calibrating accessions, offering increased active duty augmentation and recall opportunities, and allowing for natural attrition, the Navy Reserve will accomplish

this reduction within strength and fiscal controls. In the long term, however, the Navy Reserve Force will grow to approximately 60,000, and the Reserve mission-set is increased to include shipyard maintenance augmentation, unmanned aerial vehicle support, maritime operations center augmentation and additional intelligence, cyber and information dominance.

Effective Force Management:

Perform to Serve (PTS) remains our primary force-management tool to maintain balance across all enlisted ratings by ensuring that we have the right number of enlisted sailors in each rating at the right experience level. Through PTS, which uses performance criteria within individual ratings and length of service cells to ensure long-term sustainment of experience, we have made significant progress toward achieving balance across all enlisted ratings, reducing the number of overmanned ratings from 35 in 2011, to just 9 today.

Improved rating balance has resulted in more reenlistment approvals. In 2011, approximately 60 percent of PTS requests were approved, while just 1 year later 80 to 90 percent were approved, and advancement opportunity increased. PTS also allows sailors not selected for retention in their current rating to consider, as alternatives to leaving the Navy, converting to a new rating or transitioning into the Navy Reserve.

Compensation:

Compensation is a critical force-management tool. As we look for cost saving measures, we strive to ensure that we will not disadvantage sailors; rather we will look to preserve the strength of the All-Volunteer Force and ensure fiscal sustainability of our pay and benefits programs. Special and Incentive (S&I) pays provide flexible compensation incentives to address specific manning needs or other force management issues not efficiently addressed through basic pay increases alone. Navy judiciously applies S&I pays, such as Enlistment Bonuses, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses and Critical Skills Retention Bonuses, to recruit and retain sailors in key occupation specialties or critical skill areas. S&I pays are also provided as compensation for onerous or hazardous duty assignments or conditions, and for maintaining proficiency in specific skills important to national security.

Recruiting:

Navy has worked hard to achieve strong recruiting success over the past 5 years by attracting the Nation's best and brightest for America's Navy. Our recruiting brand, "America's Navy-A Global Force for Good", captures CNO's priorities while appealing to our 17-24 year-old recruiting market. In fiscal year 2012 and fiscal year 2013-to-date, Navy achieved accession goals for officers in the Active component, and for enlisted in both the Active and Reserve components. We continue to do well recruiting into priority ratings in the Naval Nuclear Propulsion Program (NNPP) and Navy Special Warfare/Special Operations (NSW/SPECOPS). Additionally, we attained the highest quality future sailors in history, with 99 percent of accessions entering as high school diploma graduates, and 90.2 percent of accessions scoring in the upper 50th percentile on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB).

Navy Recruiting leading indicators forecast that our recruiting mission will become increasingly challenging. While the quality of accessions rose between fiscal year 2009 and fiscal year 2012, accession quality has begun trending downward, and is expected to close-out the year with approximately 85 percent of accessions scoring in the upper 50th percentile on the ASVAB. While still well above DOD and Navy minimum standards, this trend is a source of concern as we continue our efforts to recruit the best America has to offer. Additionally, each month, Navy is meeting enlistment contracting goals later in the month. The impact of sequestration on recruiting resources, particularly marketing and advertising, will further increase our recruiting challenges.

Navy achieved most Active component officer recruiting goals in fiscal year 2012, but experienced a shortfall in attaining direct accession physicians, which was offset by success in recruiting within student medical officer programs. We were also successful in recruiting officers into the priority NNPP and NSW/SPECOPS mission areas. Success in officer program recruiting was further reflected by the highest ever quality and number of diversity applicants into the NROTC Program.

For the Reserve component, Navy faced challenges again this past year with recruiting for the General Officer unrestricted line communities (e.g., surface, submarine, and aviation warfare) primarily because of high active duty retention rates. In recent years, we have also had challenges in recruiting specialized medical professionals for the Reserve Component (e.g., surgeons, anesthesiologists) due to high

active duty retention, stiff competition from the civilian healthcare community, and perceived risk to civilian medical practices due to frequent mobilizations.

Fiscal year 2014 is projected to be more challenging for both officer and enlisted recruiting. Consequently, we will balance recruiter manning, accession bonuses, and the marketing and advertising budget, to continue to aggressively attack challenging areas, such as healthcare specialties, and maintain focus on priority recruiting mission areas. The fiscal year 2014 budget requests \$269 million for recruiting programs, including accession incentives, advertising, and support for Active and Reserve recruiters despite the improving economic forecast, our budget request ensures that the recruiting force remains appropriately sized and resourced for success.

Selection and Classification Programs:

Effective selection and classification programs are the foundation of Navy efforts to properly man the fleet to current and future requirements in this dynamic environment. We are using state-of-the-art technology and processes to hire recruits into jobs optimally suited to their abilities and interests. This same technology is used to identify sailors for lateral conversion into mission critical career fields. These programs have had a significant impact on reducing training losses, increasing retention and increasing promotion opportunity.

Fleet Manning:

Navy manpower has decreased by more than 50,000 sailors since 2004, through a combination of reduced force structure and reduced manning aboard individual ships and aircraft, causing an imbalance between sea and shore billets and between ratings. As a result of efforts that began in fiscal year 2012 to improve fleet manning by moving approximately 6,000 billets from shore to sea, fleet manning is projected to improve throughout the remainder of the fiscal year while gaps at sea decrease from about 11,600 to 7,800. We also project that by the end of the fiscal year, nearly 95 percent of all enlisted billets at sea will be manned, with close to 90 percent filled by the right sailor with the proper seniority and appropriate skill level and training.

Through various force management tools, including special and incentive pays applied to critical skills, voluntary/involuntary distribution, funding the Individuals Account and shore billets for sea intensive ratings, Reserve to Active augmentation, and Active Duty Definite Recall Program for Reserve Enlisted, we are shaping sailor behavior to attain optimum fleet manning. Selective application of these tools is helping retain sailors in undermanned skills, but requires continuous assessment and regular adjustments to account for changing economic conditions. Ultimately, we must ensure that gaps at sea are filled by the right sailor, with the right skills at the right time.

Retention:

Navy aggregate enlisted retention continues to be strong compared to last year, with increased retention in all zones. However, retention in select areas is challenging and our current key focus is on first term sailors. Four years ago, we reduced accessions so that we could retain more career sailors. Consequently, as these cohort groups enter their reenlistment windows, we now need a greater percentage of first term sailors to reenlist. As we monitor personnel and fleet readiness, with a focus on increasing sea duty manning, we are applying force management tools, where appropriate, to retain the right skills across pay grades. Our new and existing policies encourage sailors to commit earlier to stay for longer periods, affording increasing predictability of future personnel readiness. We recently updated reenlistment bonuses to target junior enlisted personnel to attain first term retention goals in fiscal year 2013, and sustain a healthy force into the future.

To position Navy to meet future mission requirements, we must balance the force by recruiting and retaining officers in the right mix of specialties. Officer inventory shortfalls remain in several critical communities. Offering precise targeted incentive pays and bonuses is essential to maintaining and improving manning in these mission-essential specialties.

IV. EFFECTIVE PERSONNEL READINESS

The Effective Personnel Readiness strategic priorities focus on matching sailors with jobs for which they are well-suited; and on sailor quality of life, training, education, and family support.

21st Century Sailor and Marine Initiative:

In March 2012, the Secretary of the Navy announced the 21st Century Sailor and Marine initiative. To maximize sailor personal readiness, we designed objectives and policies to maintain the resiliency of the force and to hone the most combat effective force in the history of the Department of the Navy. Our aim is to prepare sailors and their families to face life's challenges through a myriad of programs focused on creating a balanced lifestyle, on- and off-duty, while specifically addressing the needs of wounded warriors through our Navy Safe Harbor Program.

- **Health of the Force.** Navy's assessment of the overall health of the force is good, morale remains high and work satisfaction increased over the last 12 years. Our sailors are choosing to remain in the Navy; aggregate retention remains strong, though some areas continue to prove challenging. The 2012 Quality of Life Survey and Behavioral Health quick polls revealed positive feedback with standard of living/income and job satisfaction, while concern was expressed about manning shortages, long work hours and high operational tempo. As deployment lengths and schedules change, based on world events, we must monitor the impact on sailors and their families and understand the underlying factors that may distract from our operational goals. We expect the assessment of the health of the force to remain strong; however, there are areas that require significant continued focus and efforts, specifically prevention of suicides and sexual assaults. Additionally, we remain committed to providing quality care and robust programs through our wounded warrior Safe Harbor program.

- **Suicide Prevention and Operational Stress Control.** Suicide prevention extends beyond specific program efforts and strives to create an open environment that reduces barriers and encourages sailors to seek help. Navy's suicide prevention strategy concentrates on moving prevention as far left of the potential event as possible through effective execution of five lines of effort: Education and Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Sailor Care and Transformational Growth, Physical, Mental and Spiritual Fitness, and Assessment. Navy focuses on building personal resilience, promoting peer-to-peer support, enhancing family relationships, enabling intervention up-and-down the chain of command, and fostering a command climate in which help-seeking behaviors enable sustained personal resilience. Our robust programs include:

- Navy's Operational Stress Control (OSC) Program;
- Reserve Psychological Health Outreach Program (RPHOP);
- Navy Mobile Care Teams;
- Deployment Health Assessments;
- Returning Warrior Workshops;
- Project FOCUS (Families Overcoming Under Stress);
- Coalition of Sailors Against Destructive Decisions (CSADD); and
- Crisis Intervention and Response.

Navy leadership is determined to prevent suicides in our force; the loss of even one life to suicide is a one too many.

- **Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR).** Sexual assault rates in the Navy remain unacceptable; we are committed to achieving a steady reduction in the incidence of sexual assault to eradicate this abhorrent crime from our ranks. Our lines of effort to combat sexual assault are: Education and Awareness, Prevention and Intervention, Victim Advocacy and Resiliency, Investigation and Accountability and Assessment. Navy has focused proactively on prevention programs, expanded a successful model instituted at Recruit Training Command, focused on individual unit climates and instituted enhanced victim care, prosecution measures and reporting procedures. We will continue to aggressively promote and foster a culturally aware and informed Navy; respectful of all, intolerant of sexual assault, and supported by a synergistic program of prevention, advocacy and accountability.

- **Alcohol and Substance Abuse Prevention.** Navy's "zero tolerance" drug abuse policy is comprised of three key elements: detection, deterrence, and prevention. Navy Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention (NADAP) is a comprehensive, science-based program consisting of sailor education, prevention awareness, advocacy, trend analysis/threat assessment, and intervention. This past year, NADAP achieved tangible goals in reducing the number of positive urinalysis and alcohol-related incidents and increasing Navy leadership awareness of prevention programs. In 2012, Navy incorporated testing for synthetic drugs, including spice and bath salts. The testing regimen is robust and flexible enough to adjust testing protocols to the dynamic synthetic drug market through a collaborative arrangement with intelligence resources that track market changes. Initial indications are that this is having the desired deterrent effect on synthetic drug

use. We recently implemented use of hand-held Alcohol Detection Devices (ADD) as an education and awareness tool to provide sailors and commands the ability to readily identify the impact of alcohol-use decisions.

- Family Support. Navy recognizes that military service presents unique challenges and opportunities for sailors and their families. Family support programs assist commanding officers and Navy families in managing the demands of military life in concert with a healthy family life. Fleet and Family Support Centers provide services that include deployment support, crisis response, and career support and retention programs. Navy leadership is committed to investing and increasing resources for Sailor and Family Readiness Programs, including:

- sexual assault prevention and response;
- alcohol awareness and deglamorization;
- drug detection and abuse prevention;
- Navy Safe Harbor wounded warrior support;
- suicide prevention and resiliency;
- casualty assistance and funeral support;
- child care; and
- Morale, Welfare, and Recreation.

We are working to minimize the impacts of Sequestration on Sailor and Family Readiness programs to avoid adverse affects on the people each of them supports.

Navy's budget request adds \$18 million to support full implementation of the VOW Act and Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI). We are also implementing a re-designed Transition Assistance program, entitled "Transition GPS" (Goals, Plans, Succeed), which includes delivery of legally mandated requirements, such as Pre-Separation Counseling, Department of Labor (DOL) Employment Workshop and a Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Benefits briefing. Transitioning sailors will also have the option of participating in a series of two-day tailored instructional tracks within the transition GPS curriculum:

- a higher education track, for those pursuing a college degree;
- a technical training track, for those seeking job-ready skills and industry-recognized credentials in shorter-term training programs; and
- an entrepreneurship track for those desiring to start a business.

The design of all of fleet and family support programs is to help families be resilient, well-informed, and adaptable.

Training and Education:

Our most critical obligation in the continuum of training is providing sailors with the most relevant knowledge, skills, and abilities as quickly as possible to achieve optimal knowledge transfer and make best use of finite resources. This means using our established end-to-end curriculum content development-and-revision process to identify the most cost-effective solutions to deliver training without sacrificing quality. As new weapon systems and platforms are introduced, we must ensure that innovative techniques, such as interactive multimedia, simulators, and avatars, are applied when appropriate.

Navy has developed a plan to improve timeliness, relevance, and comprehensiveness of technical training. Modularized training optimizes the initial training pipeline and provides continuous training opportunities as sailors progress through their first tours. This approach creates flexibility in the pipeline and allows sailors to report sooner to their first duty station, armed with the necessary skills to have an immediate positive impact. Strategically distributing training delivery, so that sailors receive only the instruction necessary to perform their immediate duties, minimizes time between instruction and utilization, thereby, reducing knowledge-and-skill decay associated with current delays. Pilot programs evaluate the modularized training concept to ensure training quality remains high along the continuum.

- Asymmetric Advantage: There is an inherent premise that asymmetric warfare must deal with unknowns. The ability of our maritime forces to respond quickly to crises and eliminate threats is a direct result of exemplary training. Technical expertise gained through a variety of initial and advanced skills training gives sailors the ability to evaluate what needs to be done to fight and win. Navy's leadership training, mentoring, and coaching, contribute directly to development of a sailor's critical thinking skills, willingness to accept prudent risks, and ability to adjust rapidly based on situational assessment.

The discipline, technical expertise and esprit de corps that enable us to win in combat also enable us to adapt to, and accomplish, other complex missions, such as humanitarian relief efforts at home and abroad. New technologies, com-

combined with proven learning strategies, continue to drive cost-effective improvements in training. Intelligent tutoring systems and learning strategies leveraging simulation, virtual worlds, and emerging technologies, allow us to maximize training efficiency while improving training effectiveness and timeliness of delivery, ensuring our asymmetric edge is maintained.

- **Nationally Recognized:** In addition to meeting fleet performance requirements, initial skills training provided to new accessions has been consistently recognized by leading industry and training organizations for innovations that improve workplace learning. Over the past 2 years, our training commands were recognized by the prestigious American Society for Training and Development, with three “Excellence in Practice” awards and three citations. For the last 4 years, Navy has ranked as one of the country’s top training organizations on Training Magazine’s “Top 125” list. The high quality of training provided to our force is also demonstrated through thousands of college credit hours recommended by the American Council on Education, which supports our efforts to compete for the best talent in the Nation.

Additionally, our training programs are internationally recognized. We provide training and education to foreign servicemembers and civilians from over 160 nations in support of the DOD Guidance for the Employment of Forces and the Maritime Strategy, for deeper partnerships, building partner nation capacity; and improving joint, allied and coalition interoperability. On any given day, over 1,270 international military students train at over 150 schools and activities in the United States and participate in a wide-range of training activities in foreign countries. In fiscal year 2012, we finalized training arrangements for U.S. grant programs, such as the International Military Education and Training Program, Counter Terrorism Fellowship Program and African Partnership Station.

- **Transformative Training and Technology.** Traditional Navy war-fighting communities (e.g., surface, aviation, and submarine) and the recently reconstituted expeditionary community, rely increasingly on simulators to conduct training. Simulators are among the most significant improvements in our training programs. As fidelity and access to simulator technology increase, prevalence of this technology is building at Navy schoolhouses, training commands and in the fleet. Investment in simulator training increases training capacity, effectiveness, and efficiency and reduces wear on platforms and operational equipment; thereby, minimizing operation maintenance and replacement costs. Simulators used for the expeditionary community are currently resourced through Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) funding. Accordingly, we have requested an additional \$3.3 million to facilitate shifting funding for this vital simulator training into the baseline budget.

- **Joint and Professional Military Education.** Naval War College (NWC) and Naval Postgraduate School (NPS) continue to deliver core mission functions that provide critical support to the maritime strategy. Both are central to Navy’s strategic investment in Navy- and DOD-relevant education to develop a resilient, knowledgeable and adaptable force. With implementation of Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) in 2008, which includes Joint Professional Military Education (JPME), Navy has a progressive continuum of Navy-specific PME coupled with JPME, from pay grade E-1 through O-9.

- **Voluntary Education/Tuition Assistance.** Navy remains steadfast in our commitment to sustain the Tuition Assistance (TA) Program. The Chief of Naval Operations has assured sailors that TA will remain intact and available. We have made no changes to the program and continue to provide 100 percent funding up to the established caps for eligible sailors. While ongoing fiscal pressure will necessitate continued scrutiny of all investments, our goal is to ensure that we can continue meeting current obligations and fulfilling the educational goals of every sailor who desires to enroll. Our course completion rate is well over 90 percent, which we attribute in part to the exceptional support sailors receive from trained Navy education counselors. Each sailor, working with a qualified counselor, must develop an appropriate educational plan, which the counselor must approve before TA funding can be authorized and classes begin. Counselors ensure that sailors are prepared for the academic requirements associated with each sailor’s approved plan and help them streamline an attainable degree completion process.

- **Credentialing and Licensure.** Navy Credentialing Opportunities Online funds over 17,000 credentials each year for approximately 7,500 individuals. Every Navy occupation has at least one professional credential available, with more than 1,800 civilian certifications now funded. Additionally, the Navy Credentialing Program Office actively participates in the President’s Education,

Training, and Credentialing Strategic Working Group, in supporting the Presidential Call for a Career-Ready military by maximizing servicemember certifications in critical civilian job fields.

- Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC). Navy's LREC program builds capability by incentivizing language, regional, and culture learning through relevant, cost-effective education and training products structured to meet operational requirements while leveraging proven, existing resources. The program incorporates regional and cultural content in Navy Professional Military Education (NPME), provides language acquisition and sustainment training to Cryptologic Language Analysts (CTIs) and Foreign Area Officers (FAOs), and makes nonresident language instruction available to sailors who require it. To encourage language learning for Naval Special Warfare commands, expeditionary units, and Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands, Navy expanded its Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB) program to incentivize language skills at the proficiency levels specifically required for the operational readiness of those forces. Navy LREC also provided products and services to more than 110,000 sailors and coastguardsmen in 2013. In response to the Defense Strategic Guidance of January 2012, Navy has developed an Asia-Pacific Hands Pilot, which leverages existing educational resources to provide enhanced regional knowledge to select officers ordered to assignments in the Pacific Command Area of Operations.

CONCLUSION

The President's fiscal year 2014 budget request resources critical programs that will continue to support Navy manpower, personnel, training, and education priorities of: Responsive Force Management, Effective Personnel Readiness, and Sound Organizational Alignment, while maintaining a ready and capable global Navy. I look forward to working with you as we continue to shape the Navy to meet current and emerging requirements, while confronting the challenges that lie ahead. On behalf of the men and women of the U.S. Navy, and their families, thank you for your leadership, commitment, and unwavering support.

[The prepared statement of Lieutenant General Milstead follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT BY LTGEN ROBERT E. MILSTEAD, JR., USMC

I. INTRODUCTION

Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, it is my privilege to appear before you today to provide an overview on Marine Corps personnel.

As our commandant recently testified to you, sequestration—both the immediate cuts in fiscal year 2013 and the associated reductions in discretionary caps in future years—could have a significant impact on our Nation's readiness both short- and long-term. However, no matter what the implications, there are some things that must endure. Your Marine Corps is, and will continue to be, our Nation's expeditionary force in readiness. We will be ready to rapidly respond to crises around the globe to ensure the continued security of the American people and to protect the interests that underpin our prosperity. Marines will be always faithful to the trust which the American people have vested in them. Already a lean organization, your marines will continue to give you the best capability that can be squeezed from the resources you allocate for our Nation's defense. Our individual marines are the Corps' most sacred resource, and always will be.

II. END STRENGTH

Pursuant to guidance issued by the President and the Secretary of Defense, the Marine Corps has initiated a reduction in our Active component end strength from 202,100 to 182,100 by the end of fiscal year 2016. We are conducting our drawdown in a measured way. Our plan is to reduce our end strength by no more than 5,000 marines per year and will be accomplished primarily by natural attrition, voluntary separation, and retirement authorities. Involuntary separations will be minimized as much as possible, and we have no plans to conduct a reduction-in-force. Such an approach would no doubt do significant long-term damage to our ability to recruit and maintain a quality force. Our overarching goal must be to keep faith with our marines and their families.

During fiscal year 2012, we made a conscious decision to get a 'head start' on our drawdown rather than wait for fiscal year 2013. This early drawdown was achieved

primarily through increased voluntary attrition of junior enlisted marines as part of the large Grow-the-Force cohort population. As a result, the Marine Corps' active duty end strength at the end of fiscal year 2012 was 198,479 marines (including reservists who served on active duty at least 3 out of previous 4 years). Our end strength goal for fiscal year 2013 is 193,500 marines.

While our military personnel accounts have been exempted from sequester in fiscal year 2013, it would be inaccurate to assume that your marines are not to be impacted by it. Overall, the readiness of your Corps stands to take a hit. In essence, those whom have given the most to the security of this Nation are asked to accept the bulk of the risk sequestration poses to this Nation.

III. MARINE CORPS RESERVE

Our Reserve component continues to make essential contributions to Total Force efforts in Overseas Contingency Operations. We are continuing to refocus our recruiting and retention efforts on meeting our Reserve component grade and skill requirements at the unit-level. These efforts include retraining marines affected by force structure-directed actions, lowering rates of attrition, providing travel reimbursement for our senior staff noncommissioned officer and company grade officer leadership, and discreet targeting of those marines eligible to receive an incentive. As a result, we have achieved our end strength goal of 39,600 over the last 2 years.

For fiscal year 2013 and beyond, we have refined the use of incentives to strengthen unit staffing in specialties and grades where we remain critically short. In particular, our Selected Marine Corps Reserve unit staffing of company grade officers, aviators, and staff noncommissioned officers (SNCO) remains most challenging. Targeted incentives and transition assistance outreach programs help us to attract junior officers and aviators who are leaving the Active component. While transitioning officers from the Active component provides the majority of our company grade officer leadership, we have had considerable success commissioning officers directly into the Reserve. The Reserve Officer Commissioning Program, which includes Officer Candidate Course-Reserve (OCC-R)—has produced a total of 561 lieutenants for the Marine Corps since its creation in 2006 and has been key to increasing ground company grade officer fills from 21 to 67 percent. More importantly, it enables the Marine Corps Reserve to place officers in critical small unit leadership positions at the platoon and company level.

To complement outreach efforts and the use of incentives, and to address the challenges of geographic constraints, we offer occupational specialty retraining. Our retraining programs are crucial in our efforts to join enlisted marines to units that are located in areas of the country where it is geographically challenging to recruit, that are undergoing Force Structure Review Group actions, or that are in high-demand low-density Military Occupational Specialties (MOS). This training has helped us to build positive trends with respect to recruiting and retention and are integral to our future success in staffing our SNCO above the current level of 63 percent.

This year we increased efforts to fully staff Reserve aviation squadrons. To achieve this goal, we developed a number of Reserve aviation manpower initiatives designed to encourage transitioning Active component aviators to affiliate with Reserve units. Since there are a limited number of Reserve squadrons, the use of travel reimbursement, incentives, and aviator transition and conversion programs are critical to achieving our staffing goals. Altogether, these programs, combined with our prior service recruiting efforts, should provide for at least 90 percent staffing of critical combat arms and company grade officer billets by the end of fiscal year 2015 with Reserve squadrons reaching this mark 1 year later.

IV. RECRUITING

The Marine Corps is unique in that all recruiting efforts (officer, enlisted, regular, Reserve, and prior-service) fall under the purview of the Marine Corps Recruiting Command. Operationally, this provides us with tremendous flexibility and unity of command, allowing us to meet accession requirements.

To meet future challenges in the current recruiting environment, it is imperative that we maintain our high standards both for our recruiters and those who volunteer to serve in our Corps. Recruiting quality youth ultimately translates into higher performance, reduced attrition, increased retention, and improved readiness for the operating forces. Our actions, commitment, and investments today in recruiting ensure a high state of readiness in our Corps tomorrow. Severe budget constraints related to sequestration that result in reductions in recruiters, recruit advertising, and potential civilian furloughs at our recruit processing stations will degrade the quality of our recruit pool, cause disruptions in our pipeline of recruits, and place added stress on our recruiters, 71 percent of whom already work in excess of 60 hours per

week. Reductions to our recruit advertising budget jeopardizes our established market share and awareness with prospects, their influencers, and multicultural audiences, which includes diversity outreach capacity. It is important we acknowledge that today's successes are dividends from the investments made in recruiting and advertising 4 to 5 years ago.

Last year, we successfully achieved all enlisted and officer recruiting goals for both the Active and Reserve components. Our current mission for enlisted marines is 33,200 regulars (Active component) and 5,780 reservists. We expect to achieve our annual recruiting 'shipping' mission (i.e. new accessions sent to recruit training) and quality goals, but sequestration-related budget constraints may impact our contracting efforts and capacity to achieve success in fiscal year 2014. The fiscal year 2014 mission forecast is 30,200 regulars and 5,481 reservists.

Our officer accessions mission for fiscal year 2013 is 1,400 Active Duty and 125 Reserve officers. Historically, the Active component has been the exclusive source of lieutenants and captains for the Reserves. As previously noted, filling company grade officer billets for our Selected Marine Corps Reserve units is traditionally our greatest challenge, but the success from the OCC-R program is proving to help in remedying this shortfall.

Our greatest asset continues to be the individual marine. Recruiting remains the lifeblood to the Corps and our bedrock to "Make Marines, Win Battles, and Return Quality Citizens." We thank you for the generous support you have provided to us and look forward to working with you to ensure continued success in the future.

V. RETENTION

For fiscal year 2013, the Marine Corps is on track to achieve its end strength target of 193,500 Active component marines (and approximately 250 reservists who have served on active duty at least 3 of the previous 4 years). It is vital during our drawdown that the Marine Corps continue to shape our force to meet continuing mission requirements and fill critical military occupational specialties (MOSs) with the most qualified marines. Incentive pays remain critical to this effort, allowing the Marine Corps to fill hard to recruit positions, such as crypto linguists and reconnaissance. Enlistment bonuses also allow us to ship new recruits at critical times to balance recruit loads at the depots and meet school seat requirements. It is important to note that only 8 percent of new Marine Corps recruits receive an enlistment bonus. Similarly, Selective Reenlistment Bonuses (SRBs) allow us to shape our career force. SRBs target critical MOSs and supports lateral movement of marines to these MOSs.

VI. CIVILIAN MARINES

Our civilian marines support the mission and daily functions of the Marine Corps and are an integral part of our Total Force. They exemplify our core values; they embrace esprit de corps, teamwork, and pride in belonging to our Nation's Corps of Marines. Serving alongside our marines throughout the world, in every occupation and at every level, our civilian appropriated funded workforce remains the leanest of all Services, with a ratio of 1 civilian to every 10 active duty marines. Over 93 percent of our civilians do not work in headquarters' elements in the Pentagon; they are at our bases, stations, depots, and installations. Sixty eight percent are veterans who have chosen to continue to serve our Nation; of those, a full 13 percent have a certified disability. Our civilian non-appropriated funded workforce steadfastly continues to provide vital support to our marines, Reserve marines, their families, and our wounded, ill, and injured.

The potential human impact associated with furloughing our civilian marines is significant. While we would like to believe that a discontinuous furlough will reduce the impact on our employees, most will not be able to easily absorb this sudden loss of income, even over a period of several months. With prolonged budgetary uncertainty employee stress is increasing, morale is declining, and at some point productivity will begin to suffer. Marine Corps bases and commands in Virginia, California, North Carolina, and Georgia will feel the most dramatic impact as hiring pools stagnate and the essential talent needed to conduct missions there begins migrating.

Our civilian labor represents less than 5 percent of the Marine Corps' total O&M budget, demonstrating that our "best value" for the defense dollar applies to our civilians as well as our marines.

VII. WOMEN IN SERVICE REVIEW

On January 24, 2013, the Secretary of Defense rescinded the 1994 policy that restricted women from combat roles. The Secretary has provided the services ample

time to assess this change in policy by setting a deadline for full implementation of 1 January 2016. The Commandant and the entire Marine Corps are dedicated to maintaining the highest levels of combat readiness and capitalizing upon every opportunity to enhance our warfighting capabilities and the contributions of every marine; it is the right thing to do. Our ongoing deliberate, measured and responsible approach to validate occupational performance standards for all marines is consistent with the Secretary's decision to rescind the direct combat exclusion rule for women. As our Corps moves forward with this process, our focus will remain on combat readiness and generating combat-ready units while simultaneously ensuring maximum success for every marine. The talent pool from which we select our finest warfighters will consist of all qualified individuals, regardless of gender.

Our implementation plan will take a two-pillar approach, which will be conducted concurrently—one for previously closed occupational specialties and the other for closed units. The first pillar will include a three-step process: (1) review and validate the physically demanding tasks by occupational specialty; (2) test male and female marines on these physically demanding tasks and correlate their performance to scores on the current Physical Fitness Test and Combat Fitness Test; and (3) develop a safe, physical test that will serve as a predictive mechanism for recruiters to use to determine an applicant's physical propensity to successfully accomplish the physically demanding tasks required of an MOS.

The second pillar will include a phased expansion of our assignments of females in open MOSs to previously closed ground combat units. These assignments are a continuation of an effort which the Marine Corps began in June 2012 known as the Exception to Policy (ETP) pilot program. The Marine Corps opened 371 Marine and 60 Navy billets in open Military Occupational Specialties to females in previously closed units under the ETP. These 19 previously closed operational units included artillery, tanks, assault amphibian, combat engineers, and low altitude air defense communities. The assessments and feedback from these units are positive. Expansion of this pilot program in newly-opened units to female noncommissioned officers will be considered as assessment of the current assignments of SNCOs and officers to those units indicate that additional assignments would be successful. A phased approach will provide leadership the opportunity to address issues, establish a solid mentorship program, and progress towards the necessary social/cultural shifts within these units. Overall, 90 percent of our military occupational specialties are open to females, as well as 68 percent of our table of organization (T/O) billets.

VIII. HAZING

Hazing violates our institutional character and disrespects our most precious asset—our marines and sailors. Consequently, the Marine Corps will continue to pursue the actions necessary to eliminate hazing in any form. In April 2012, a Marine Corps working group was convened to examine hazing prevention and response within the Marine Corps. The working group's efforts centered on conducting a critical review of the Marine Corps' current policies and procedures and culminated with the development of specific recommendations for increasing our effectiveness at preventing and responding to hazing. These recommendations, upon final approval, will be incorporated into our current policy.

The most significant planned changes to the Marine Corps' new hazing policy include: mandatory and immediate reporting all hazing allegations irrespective of the initiation or completion of the initial investigation, mandatory reporting of hazing allegations within the existing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (DASH) database, utilization of the DASH database as a comprehensive, service-level hazing database enabling tracking of all reported hazing allegations from start to finish, and amplification of the Marine Corps' hazing definition in order to enhance its application in real-world scenarios.

In the short-term, implementation of these procedural changes may result in an increased number of reported hazing incidents. However, the positive consequence of this potential increase is that it may indicate growing trust in leadership to effectively respond to hazing allegations. Through this foundation of mutual trust, the Marine Corps will more accurately determine the prevalence of hazing within our ranks and ultimately develop more effective prevention plans.

IX. DIVERSITY

The Marine Corps is committed to attracting, mentoring and retaining the most talented men and women who bring a diversity of background, culture and skill in service to our Nation. In both representation and assignment of marines, diversity remains a strategic issue. Our diversity effort is structured with the understanding that the objective of diversity is not merely to strive for a force that reflects a rep-

representational connectedness with the rich fabric of the American people, but to raise total capability through leveraging the strengths and talents of all marines.

We are near completion of a new comprehensive campaign plan to focus our diversity effort in areas where improvement is most needed and anticipate release of this roadmap this year. This is an effort facilitated through our standing Diversity Review Board and Diversity Executive Steering Committee chartered to establish the foundations for diversity success in the Total Force. During January 2013, the Marine Corps held an Executive Off Site for Diversity to commence senior executive action in support of the long term diversity effort. In addition, since 2010, we have conducted leadership seminars that introduce diverse college undergraduates and high school students to Marine leadership traits and leadership opportunities in the Marine Corps; we are actively seeking new communities within which to continue this effort.

The Marine Corps has established minority officer recruiting and mentoring as the highest priority in our recruiting efforts. Because we acknowledge the accession and retention of minority officers has been a challenge for our Corps, we are committed to taking steps to further facilitate the mentoring and career development of all our officers with emphasis on our minority officers in order to encourage the retention of our best officers no matter their background.

Overall, we seek to communicate the Marine Corps diversity mission through community outreach and recruit marketing; to ensure continued opportunities for merit based development and advancement; and to optimize training and education to increase the understanding for all marines of the value that diversity brings to the Total Force.

X. TAKING CARE OF MARINES, SAILORS, AND FAMILIES

The Marine Corps' approach to potential sequestration cuts to our Marine and family support portfolio is focused on preserving programs that support the health and welfare of our marines and their families. These protected programs collectively promote the physical and mental well-being of marines and families and are considered most essential in meeting the operational objectives of the Marine Corps. We will have to prioritize our resources to ensure we maintain these protected programs while taking risk in lower priority programs.

Furthermore, any actions that impact our civilian workforce will directly impact our capability to provide essential support services to marines and their families. A furlough would impact our direct-care service, decreasing service hours across Behavioral Health, Family Readiness, Personal and Professional Development, and Family Care programs, including child care. However, our highest priority family programs will be protected to the greatest degree possible, as will our Wounded Warrior Regiment, the command responsible for recovery care for our wounded, ill, and injured marines.

Caring for our Families

Our Family Readiness Program strengthens and fortifies marines and families by providing official unit communication, readiness preparedness training, information on and referral to qualified helping professionals, and vital unit, installation and community connection. Our Family Readiness Officers are an asset throughout the Total Force and support the commander's family readiness mission through direct interaction with marines and families. Our Marine Corps Family Team Building training provides preventative education to marines and families and enhances their quality of life, provides a feeling of empowerment, and increases levels of resiliency. Lifestyle, Insights, Networking, Knowledge, and Skills (L.I.N.K.S.) training, for example, helps marines and families connect to the military culture and teaches how best to thrive in it. eMarine, our secure family readiness website, delivers strategic communications to marines and their families, both Active Duty and Reserve, whether they are stationed at large installations or in remote locations. It gives family members access to documents, photos and videos, discussion forums, and information about their marine's unit from anywhere in the world, 24/7. We continue to improve and streamline our programs in fiscal year 2013, with a focus on our computer-based Marine Corps Family Team Building curriculum and a new initiative to promote volunteerism to enhance unit morale and family readiness.

Our Family Care programs support the development continuum of Marine Corps children from birth to their teens. First, our school liaisons provide school districts with information about the needs of Marine Corps families and access to training and counseling services to support teachers and students. Marine parents are comforted by the support of a local education expert, who provides meaningful insight to new transfers and those with questions on local education policies. Second, child care services remain a high priority, and we plan to increase our child care capacity

with additional spaces in fiscal years 2013 and 2014. Third, families enrolled in our Exceptional Family Member Program strongly endorse our focus on providing a continuum of care and the improvements made to their level of support. The Marine Corps continues to underwrite the cost of up to 40 hours of short-term respite care per month for enrolled families, providing more than 400,000 hours of respite care in fiscal year 2012.

Transition Assistance

Our transition assistance will be integrated into the lifecycle of a marine from recruitment, through separation or retirement, and beyond as a veteran marines. Our first step is our revised Transition Readiness Seminar, which now gives marines a choice of one of four pathways during this program: College/University Education; Employment; Vocational or Technical Training; or Entrepreneurship. This tailored approach reduces information overload, targets individual needs of the marine, promotes effective military skills translation, and is in full compliance with the VOW to Hire Heroes Act and the recommendations of the President's Veterans Employment Initiative. The Marine for Life Program, with its nationwide network of Marine for Life Representatives, will support improved reach-back and outreach support for those veteran marines who require localized support in their hometowns with information, opportunities, or other specific needs. These assets help veterans develop and maintain local networks of Marine-friendly individuals, employers, and organizations.

Sexual Assault Prevention and Response

Sexual assault is a crime that is incompatible with Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment. Not only does it undermine mission readiness and unit cohesion, sexual assault results in an irrevocable loss of faith in the institution and violates the basic principles every marine has vowed to uphold and defend. In step with our Commandant-directed 2012 Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) Campaign Plan, the SAPR Program implemented large-scale Corps-wide training initiatives, utilizing a top-down leadership model. SAPR's training message charges leadership with establishing an environment that is non-permissive to any misconduct or crime—especially sexual assault—and making certain that the Marine Corps' high standard of discipline is maintained. SAPR training remains unequivocal in its assertion, however, that the inherent duty of preventing sexual assault belongs ultimately to marines of every rank.

While aggressive in our prevention initiatives, we remain steadfast in our commitment to victim care and response, never ceasing in our efforts to ensure that all victims of sexual assault receive the kind of supportive services and justice that preserve their dignity and safety. Response systems have been strengthened through intensified credentialing requirements for SAPR personnel, as well as through an increased number of SAPR personnel in the field. In addition, the Commandant directed a reorganization of our legal community to improve our ability to prosecute complex cases. The centerpiece of this new model is the regional complex trial team comprised of experienced military prosecutors and augmented by civilian highly qualified experts, providing a wealth of experience for the prosecution of such cases. Eliminating sexual assault in our ranks is our ultimate goal, and the Commandant intends to stay personally and actively engaged in leading this campaign.

Behavioral Health Support

The integration of our behavioral health programs seamlessly weaves our efforts in suicide prevention and response, combat and operational stress, substance abuse, and family advocacy into the support network of command structures and the health and human services across the Marine Corps. We focus on evidence-based practices to ensure we are providing effective support in these critical areas. The Marine Corps is increasing the number of personnel available on installations to develop, implement, and execute behavioral health prevention and treatment assistance. Community Counseling Centers are being established to enhance clinical case management capabilities as well as easier resource system navigation and ensure that marines are properly screened, tracked, and referred to appropriate behavioral health services. We are expanding our Military Family Life Consultant program so that these licensed clinical providers are embedded into the larger support network of command structures and can provide confidential counseling when needed.

We are implementing our Behavioral Health Integrated Training, which will consolidate all behavioral health information into a single training session that focuses on common risk and protective factors across the full spectrum of behavioral health issues. Our Behavioral Health and Brain Injury Advisory Committee meets quarterly to advise senior Marine Corps leadership on emerging programs and issues, solicit senior leadership guidance and feedback regarding integration efforts, and

identify gaps in services delivery as well as opportunities to gain efficiencies. Our Behavioral Health Integrated Case Management System will facilitate the communication of clinical and administrative data across behavioral health programs.

Suicide Prevention and Response

One suicide is too many. Suicide prevention is not a single act but rather a series of actions. The Marine Corps is actively engaged in making lasting improvements to the overall health, well-being, and quality of life for marines. Each tragic loss to suicide has a far-reaching impact on families, friends, and our entire Marine Corps community. Saving lives requires vigilance and our concerted effort to harness the strength of engaged leaders. Engaged leaders are alert to those at risk for suicide and take action to help marines address the hard times or pain in their lives, helping individual marines optimize their physical, psychological, social, and spiritual spheres and revitalize depleted areas. Fit marines are fortified and strengthened and better able to withstand the tensions and stressors of life in and out of the Marine Corps.

Leaders prevent suicide by strengthening all marines and encouraging them to engage helping services early when problems are most manageable. Whenever possible, we deploy evidence-based prevention practices such as our award-winning "Never Leave a Marine Behind" suicide prevention training program, which is peer-led and updated to reflect emerging evidence-based practices. Our Suicide Prevention Program Officers, located at our battalions and squadrons, will be an administrative and coordinating resource for the commander to use in managing a unit's suicide prevention program. Our DSTRESS Line, which is staffed by veteran marines and corpsmen, family members and civilian counselors trained in Marine Corps culture, provides anonymous, 24/7 counseling services to any marine, attached sailor or family member. We work closely with DOD and forge strong relationships with other Federal agencies, academia, and private industry in an effort to work together to better understand suicide and improve our programs.

Combat and Operational Stress Control

Our Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) program assists marine leaders with maintaining warfighting capabilities by addressing the impacts of stress, enhancing fitness, and addressing the long-term health and well-being of marines and their families. COSC resources support all of the tenets of good leadership. Understanding the full range of stress reactions and associated leader actions enhances the ability to mitigate risk and take care of marines in all environments. COSC efforts prevent, identify, and manage combat and operational stress-related issues and increase access to mental health care by breaking stigma and raising awareness. COSC principles are embedded in Operational Stress Control and Readiness Team Training, Deployment Cycle Training and third location decompression events that reach the Total Force. We have improved training including education and awareness on Traumatic Brain Injury, continuing the destigmatization of behavioral health care, and incorporating current information from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom deployments.

Marine Total Fitness. In fiscal year 2013, we are continuing to advance our Marine Total Fitness concept to develop marines of exemplary physical, psychological, spiritual, and social character. Marine Total Fitness infuses fitness-based information and concepts into all aspects of a marine's training and readiness and prepares marines to successfully operate in and respond to the rigors, demands, and stressors of both combat and garrison.

XI. SEMPER FIT AND EXCHANGE SERVICES

Semper Fit and Recreation programs supports the social and physical cords of Marine Total Fitness efforts by providing the best mix of programs and services to marines and their families. This year we are expanding programs, such as High Intensity Tactical Training (HITT), a comprehensive strength and conditioning program geared towards optimizing physical performance and combat readiness. Another program slated for expansion to additional installations is Operation Adrenaline Rush (OAR), which combines Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) principles with an Outdoor Recreation Adventure activity to aid in mitigating boredom and high risk behavior for marines recently returned from deployment. OAR assists marines with reintegration by empowering small unit leaders, maintaining combat readiness, and reinforcing unit cohesion. The goal is to increase social resilience through unit-driven recreational activities such as whitewater rafting, mountain biking, and deep sea fishing. Semper Fit is focused on providing relevant programs that promote the overall fitness and health of our Corps.

The Marine Corps Exchange (MCX) is an important part of the overall non-monetary benefits package. MCX success is measured on the program's value and contributions to the readiness and retention of marines, as well as our ability to provide unparalleled customer service, premier facilities, and valued goods and services at a significant savings. With MCX, unlike any other retail store, marines can rely upon a high quality product at a fair price and know that the proceeds are returned to their community, creating a stronger Marine Corps.

Deployed support is one of the most important services we provide. Our Exchange, Recreation and Fitness, Communication, and MCCS Amenity Wi-Fi services not only boost and maintain morale, but also help to reduce mission-related stress:

- Exchange. Ongoing missions in Afghanistan include the operation of two Direct Operation Exchanges Tactical at Camps Leatherneck and Dwyer, one Tactical Field Exchange at Camp Delaram II, one Imprest Fund Site at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Edinburgh, and numerous Warfighter Express Services Teams operating out of Camps Leatherneck, Dwyer, and FOB Edinburgh.
- Recreation and Fitness. We assist in providing transportable recreation, sports, and fitness equipment to units throughout Helmand Province.
- Communication. We have delivered 13 satellite communications systems to units in Afghanistan. Each system has 2 phones which each provide 6,000 free minutes per month and 5 laptops that allow internet access and chat/video capabilities to deployed marines. In 2012, there were 94,272 phone calls using 776,644 minutes of air time; approximately 72,860 marines were able to use the Morale Satellite services at several different FOBs/COPs during 2012.
- MCCS Amenity Wi-Fi Solution. The Marine Corps Community Services Amenity Wireless Fidelity (Wi-Fi) Solution program deploys Wi-Fi capability at various facilities on installation at no cost to marines and families. This morale and welfare initiative helps families stay in contact while separated from their marine.

XII. WOUNDED WARRIOR REGIMENT

The Marine Corps' Wounded Warrior Regiment (WWR) is a fundamental component of the Marine Corps' pledge to "keep faith" with those who have served. The WWR supports marines wounded in combat, who fall ill, or who are injured in the line of duty.

The WWR administers the Marine Corps' Recovery Coordination Program that ensures wounded, ill, and injured (WII) marines' medical and nonmedical care needs are fully integrated. Through its comprehensive organization of nonmedical care assets, the WWR has been supporting the recoveries of WII marines and their families since it was established in 2007. In the broadest terms, this includes determining the degree of support required through case review, working with marines and their families to develop recovery plans, and executing those plans for their return to duty or reintegration to their hometowns. When WII marines successfully execute their recovery plans, they are well-positioned for their future endeavors.

Under the Marine Corps' proven care model, WII marines may remain with their parent units so long as their medical conditions allow and their units can support them. When WII marines remain with their parent units, they are also supported by the WWR through its various assets. This support is accomplished through direct contact with the WII marine and family members and by providing information and resources to the WII marine's commander. WII marines not assigned to a WWR element are still connected through the Wounded Warrior Battalion Contact Centers, where staff reaches out at regular intervals to ensure their needs are being met.

Recovery Care Coordinators and Marines' Comprehensive Recovery Plans

To be successful in his or her recovery mission, a WII marine must take a pragmatic look forward and set attainable goals. These goals must be developed based on each marine's, and his or her family's needs, and incorporated into a plan with carefully articulated and monitored actionable steps.

The Marine Corps continues to fully comply with the "Wounded Warrior Act" section of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008. Prominent in this section is the requirement to assign a Recovery Care Coordinator (RCC) to recovering marines. All eligible marines, generally those who are severely to catastrophically ill or injured and unlikely to return to duty, may be assigned an RCC. RCCs meet with a WII marine within 72 hours of assignment and begin a comprehensive assessment process which takes into consideration the various recovery components (i.e., housing, finances, counseling, family support, disability evaluation,

employment, and more). The results of this assessment process form the basis for the Marine's Comprehensive Recovery Plan (CRP). Each CRP is tailored to the WII marine's and family's specific recovery circumstances. The CRP document, which is owned by the WII marine, is frequently updated and adjusted to suit the WII marine's evolving situation.

Support for Caregivers

Compassionate and dedicated caregivers are central to recovery and they endure many hardships, to include financial setbacks when they leave their jobs, to be with their recovering marine. We thank Congress for authorizing Special Compensation for Assistance With Activities of Daily Living. The WWR is also providing our marines' caregivers the opportunity to receive caregiver training, which is identical to the caregiver training provided by the Department of Veterans Affairs to support their Caregiver Stipend Program.

Transition

Most WII marines will not return to duty and will transition to veteran status. Meeting this transition milestone prepared and confident is paramount to a WII marine's success in his or her civilian community. The WWR's transition support is twofold: we help WII marines and families successfully enter the VA system and assist them with securing rewarding and fulfilling careers.

For WII marines with CRPs, prior to leaving active duty service, the Marine's RCC will schedule phone conferences with the Marine's VA recovery team members to ensure all required paperwork is transferred and benefits are on schedule for payment. Marines not joined to a WWR element may be provided VA transition information via the WWR's fact sheets and staff who hold subject matter expertise. They are also assisted through the WWR's Call Center. The WWR highly encourages all WII marines to register with the VA's eBenefits, a joint VA/DOD web portal that provides resources and self-service capabilities to veterans, servicemembers, and their families.

WWR has transition cells at its Regimental Headquarters and its Wounded Warrior Battalions where coordinators work with marines in a one-on-one setting to conduct comprehensive career assessments; develop education and career plans; provide career coaching; identify education, internship and training opportunities; and facilitate networking and transition activities such as job fairs. WWR also coordinates with external entities to enhance WII marines' transition success. The Regiment has facilitated the placement of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service counselors aboard various Marine Corps installations; WII marines continue to take advantage of Federal internships through the Operation Warfighter Program; and the WWR continually coordinates with charitable organizations, such as the USO and Hire Heroes USA, to provide transition workshops and opportunities specifically geared toward WII servicemembers and their families.

To further ensure WII marines are succeeding in their civilian lives, we utilize our Sergeant Merlin German Call Center to make outreach calls to marines and families who have transitioned. The Call Center conducts an average of 7,000 calls per month. Call Center staff, to include psychological health professionals, is also available 24/7 to accept calls from marines and families. Moreover, WII marines who transition from the WWR receive varying levels of needs-based support for 90 days (or more if needed) to ensure smooth transition to the VA.

The WWR's District Injured Support Coordinator Program (DISC) provides assistance to WII marines transitioning from military to veterans status through its geographically dispersed network of marines. Our DISCs are purposefully aligned with the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Integrated Service Networks to further enhance coordination with VA services. DISCs provide a multitude of services to include conducting face-to-face visits with marines and families, ensuring marines are registered with the VA, providing information on various community resources, and linking WII marines in need back to the WWR for assistance.

Collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs

Given the transition outcomes of our WII marines, the value of our collaboration with the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot be overstated. Although our WII marines may depart our ranks, they are always considered marines and we have a sense of duty to advocate for them after they have transitioned. At the strategic, tactical, and operational levels, the WWR partners with various VA entities to ensure our marines receive the transition support they require. With our VA colleagues, we engage in policy development that will suit the interests of WII marines from point of incident throughout their veteran status. Currently, we are active participants in the Interagency Care and Coordination Committee, which is working to better harmonize the efforts of the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs,

simplify processes, and reduce confusion for our recovering servicemembers and their families. We have a Marine Corps Liaison Officer position established at the VA for enhanced coordination. Our RCCs and other multi-disciplinary team advocates regularly engage with Federal Recovery Coordinators on behalf of our WWII marines who have sustained serious or very serious wounds, injuries, or illnesses. We will continue to identify ways to collaborate with our VA partners on behalf of our Nation's wounded, ill, and injured.

As this statement demonstrates, the Marine Corps is heavily invested in providing for WWII marines and their dedicated family members. Whether we are a Nation at war or in times of peace, the WWR will continue to successfully meet their care and support needs. For the Marine Corps, wounded warrior care is not a process, but a persistent relationship between the Marine Corps and our marines.

XIII. CONCLUSION

To continue to be successful, we must always remember that our individual marines are our most precious asset, and we must continue to attract and retain the best and brightest into our ranks. Marines are proud of what they do. They are proud of the "Eagle, Globe, and Anchor" and what it represents to our country. With your support, a vibrant Marine Corps will continue to meet our Nation's call.

Thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.
Secretary Ginsberg?

STATEMENT OF HON. DANIEL B. GINSBERG, ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE FOR MANPOWER AND RESERVE AFFAIRS

Mr. GINSBERG. Chairman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and members of the subcommittee, Lieutenant General Jones and I would like to thank you for the honor and opportunity to testify today on behalf of more than 700,000 Active, Guard, Reserve, and civilian airmen who make up the most capable air space and cyber space force the world has ever known. We know that you and the members of this subcommittee are keenly interested in the well-being and support of our airmen. We must start by thanking you for all that you have done and continue to do on their behalf.

As the Nation draws down its efforts in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility and prepares to support a strategic shift to the Asia-Pacific, the Air Force finds itself at a critical juncture. The Air Force faces continual demands on its people and all its specialized capabilities, while dealing with new fiscal realities. Our airmen have met every challenge and are poised to respond to these new challenges in the future.

The strictures of sequestration have forced the Air Force to face tough choices, like a furlough of civilians and standing down of some of our combat coded flying squadrons. At the direction of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Air Force is protecting funding for war time operations, wounded warrior programs and, to the extent feasible, programs most closely associated with this new defense strategy, as well, of course, as family programs.

The Air Force remains committed to providing cost-effective medical care, services, and programs to maintain balanced, healthy, and resilient airmen and families. Initiatives implemented by our airmen and Family Readiness Centers, such as transition assistance, wounded warrior, Yellow Ribbon, and suicide prevention programs, have made considerable progress.

This past year, we confronted the problem of sexual assault and unprofessional relationships at basic military training, and we

have strengthened our sexual assault prevention efforts with new initiatives, like an Air Force-wide health and welfare inspection and the establishment of a Special Victim's Counsel program. The Air Force remains steadfast in our commitment to prevent incidents of sexual assault, provide victim care where assault has occurred, and hold those who commit such acts accountable.

Looking ahead, the Air Force will continue to balance competing defense needs among the size of our force structure, today's readiness, and modernization in the future. The Air Force is committed to carrying out our national defense mission while dealing with the disruption of sequestration.

As I have said before, it is both an honor and a privilege to represent and advocate on behalf of our Nation's airmen as we search for better and smarter ways to approach and solve our Nation's security challenges. Thank you for your continued commitment and overwhelming support to our total force airmen, civilians, and families. I look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared joint statement of Mr. Ginsberg and Lieutenant General Jones follows:]

PREPARED JOINT STATEMENT BY HON. DANIEL B. GINSBERG AND LT. GEN. DARRELL D. JONES, USAF

Today the 690,000 Total Force airmen of your Air Force are a highly trained, experienced, and battle tested force, standing as vanguards of freedom around the world. Despite the last 2 decades of sustained conflict, the men and women of your Air Force are as dedicated, innovative and hard working as ever before. The Air Force does not take lightly its primary role of training and equipping the highest quality airmen the President, Congress, combatant commanders, and ultimately our Nation can call upon as needed.

Airmen are the backbone of our Air Force. Throughout our Service history and ingrained in our culture, is a spirit of innovation where airmen are enabled and expected to find novel solutions to ensure domination in our multi-dimensional battlefield of air, space, and cyber space. In order for airmen to continue to fulfill their expected roles as innovative leaders and warriors, the Air Force must remain focused on recruiting, training, developing, supporting and retaining a world-class, All-Volunteer Force. Maintaining an All-Volunteer Air Force is a significant undertaking and requires a continuous and deliberate investment of time and national resources.

MILITARY AND CIVILIAN PERSONNEL BUDGETS

The Air Force is committed to maintaining and sustaining the appropriate size and force mix to meet mission requirements with acceptable personnel tempo and associated stress on the force. Total Force Military changes in end strength are based on Strategic Guidance, the Air Force operating budget, and an operational assessment to align manpower resources to critical missions. Fiscal realities require the Air Force to face tough choices, trading size to protect a high quality and ready force while balancing overall risk to military capabilities. The Air Force will focus on reinforcing military end strength in high priority areas, such as Cyber, Intelligence, F-35, KC-46, and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) programs.

The Air Force's total military end strength forecast for fiscal year 2014 will be reduced by 2,640 from 506,040 to 503,400, which represents an approximate 0.5 percent reduction from fiscal year 2013 levels. This will result in an Active Duty (AD) military end strength reduction from 329,460 to 327,600. Our Air Force Reserve (AFR) military end strength will decrease by 480 to 70,400, and Air National Guard (ANG) military end strength will decrease by 300 to 105,400. The fiscal year 2014 budget includes a total budget authority request of \$29.2 billion for AD, ANG and AFR military personnel. Included in this budget is a 1 percent military base pay increase, a 4.2 percent increase in the housing allowance and a 3.4 percent increase in subsistence allowance. In addition, the civilian personnel budget requested for fiscal year 2014 is \$11.4 billion for a programmed civilian strength of 186,026, and includes a 1 percent pay raise.

Programmed reductions were accomplished in base/management operating support and logistics/maintenance functional areas, as a result of declining defense budgets, and in an effort to make the best use of our resources, including military manpower. These reductions to our military end strength would place greater responsibilities on the remaining civilian and contractor workforce.

Subsequently, OSD tasked the Services to analyze their civilian workforce requirements. Working with OSD, Air Force conducted a comprehensive, enterprise-wide review examining the full spectrum of operations—from base level to headquarters activities in an effort to develop a wide range of initiatives to forge a leaner, more effective Air Force in support of defense guidance. As a result, civilian workforce reductions are planned which are commensurate with our programmed military reductions. The civilian workforce review also provided a means to shift resources in support of Cyber Command and source emerging requirements such as enhanced transition programs compliant with the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) to Hire Heroes Act and the Veteran Employment Initiative (VEI).

MILITARY FORCE MANAGEMENT

By trading size for quality, the Air Force is postured to rapidly respond to a full range of contingencies and threats to national security interests. Our Force Management program is a tailored multi-year strategy focused on sizing and shaping the total force with the right balance of skills to meet current and emerging joint mission demands. The program ensures career field sustainability as we retain sufficient personnel inventory and experience to meet career field requirements. The Air Force's strategy over the past few years has been aggressive, allowing us to meet congressionally mandated end strength requirements and maintain a high quality force by leveraging voluntary programs first, offering incentive programs where needed, and implementing involuntary actions when required.

Our active duty officer and enlisted force experienced continued high retention rates in fiscal year 2012, just below the 20-year high of 2011. This continued trend required us to employ a variety of voluntary and involuntary force management programs to achieve the required losses to stay within our fiscal year 2012 332,800 programmed end strength. Our force management initiatives brought the force within 0.1 percent of end strength for fiscal year 2012, with the officer force 408 below and the enlisted force 545 above their targets.

Our force management efforts in fiscal year 2012 positioned us well for fiscal year 2013 but a National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2013 mandated 3,340 end strength reduction and lingering high retention require the continued use of Force Management tools. The Air Force's voluntary programs in fiscal year 2013 are similar to the officer and enlisted programs offered in fiscal year 2012. For our officer force, we will rely solely on voluntary measures to achieve additional losses over normal attrition. Voluntary programs will include time-in-grade, active duty service commitment, 8 versus 10 years of commissioned service waivers for certain year groups and overage career fields. We will also continue the Palace Chase program for eligible lieutenant colonels and below to retain experience levels in our Reserve component.

For our enlisted force, we will rely on a number of voluntary and involuntary measures to achieve additional losses over normal attrition. Voluntary programs include Limited Active Duty Service Commitment and time-in-grade waivers, as well as Palace Chase opportunities. Additional enlisted measures include Date of Separation Rollbacks, a very limited reduction in accessions, reduced opportunities for retraining after initial skills training failures, and Career Job Reservation constraints.

The AFR is also experiencing a reduction in end strength and while the cuts are smaller, they still require meticulous handling to maintain a strong force. Since AFR units are primarily filled by reservists who live relatively close to their base of assignment, force structure changes typically result in members separating from the AFR if they cannot find a position reasonably close to their residence. A number of authorities like Inactive Duty Training (IDT) travel pay and even Permanent Change of Station (PCS) entitlements, however, will help retain some of these well-trained and experienced assets in other vacant billets nation-wide. Authorities such as 180 days of Tricare and retention of the Montgomery GI Bill we help ease transition from the selected Reserve for those members unable to be placed in a suitable position. In anticipation of future reductions, the ANG and AFR are also submitting legislation to request approval for the Temporary Early Retirement Authority (TERA) and retention of education benefits for those members involuntarily discharged because they could not find a position. These additional authorities will help shape the force while allowing a smooth landing for those who are forced to end their careers.

The objective of our fiscal year 2014 Force Management strategy is to continue to maximize voluntary programs first in order to minimize the need for involuntary measures. Given the current fiscal challenges, we will continue to assess the need to pursue voluntary and involuntary force management actions to meet future authorized end strength levels.

CIVILIAN FORCE MANAGEMENT

The Air Force continues to perform strategic assessments to ensure our civilian workforce maintains mission critical competencies and to eliminate redundant functions in order to improve the effectiveness of the Air Force mission. The Air Force's civilian Strategic Human Capital Plan identified Cyber, Acquisition, Nuclear, and Engineering as critical occupational series necessary to meet current mission requirements and defense guidance. Our efforts are focused on ensuring these critical functions have the necessary talent to meet mission requirements, including heavy recruiting efforts to fill these highly technical specialties.

In 2010, the Defense Department began a comprehensive effort to increase efficiencies, reduce overhead costs, and eliminate redundant functions in order to improve the effectiveness of the DOD enterprise. In fiscal year 2012, the Air Force voluntarily retired or separated approximately 3,500 civilian employees through three rounds of Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) and Voluntary Separation Incentive Pay (VSIP) to achieve civilian reductions. In addition, the service received limited approval to implement Reduction In Force (RIF) actions on positions in the Air Force Reserve Command (AFRC), Air Education and Training Command (AETC) and Air Force Space Command (AFSPC). The RIFs resulted in 77 separations, 27 reassignments, and 69 grade reduction actions (without reductions in pay) which mitigated the need for involuntary separations.

The Air Force requires latitude to continue voluntary separation programs, such as VERA and VSIP to allow civilian employees to retire or separate on a voluntary basis and avoid involuntary separations for fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014. The Air Force will also require RIF authorities, including involuntary separations, as an option to balance the civilian workforce skills if reductions are not achieved through voluntary separation programs.

QUALITY TRAINED AND DEVELOPED FORCE

Our Chief of Staff clearly articulated in his recent vision statement that "Education and training are the foundation of our airpower advantage ... and ... we must safeguard and reinforce that foundation" by ensuring we remain the most technically proficient, best-educated, and best-trained air force in the world. Developing the world's best airmen requires the best education and training. The developmental education pillar of our force development framework includes Professional Military Education (PME), Fellowships, Advanced Academic Degrees (AAD), Professional Continuing Education (PCE) and voluntary education. The training pillar includes initial skills training and retraining as well as skills and proficiency training such as Language, Region, and Culture training.

Our enlisted PME and Officer developmental education programs provide an educational foundation through the delivery of carefully prescribed skill sets or institutional competencies. Our leadership doctrine defines these competencies and lays out a road map to develop our force to accomplish national security and national defense objectives. Reductions to developmental education would have severe long-term effects to the professional and innovative capabilities of our Air Force.

The Air Force is striving to enhance the development, sustainment, and utilization of cross-culturally competent airmen across the Total Force to lead and enhance partnerships in today's dynamic global environment. The ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders and support the Department of Defense (DOD) Security Cooperation mission of building international partnerships is critical in meeting complex and emergent threats and will require greater foreign-language, regional, and cultural skills.

Air Force Voluntary Education (Vol Ed) programs provide comprehensive opportunities for airmen to pursue programs of higher education in order to meet Air Force goals of a highly trained and educated workforce. Vol Ed program funding is largely comprised of Military Tuition Assistance (MilTA) which is provided to service-members to pursue accredited post-secondary programs. MilTA supports and affects approximately 105,000 military airmen in an active duty status (of those, approximately 78,000 are junior noncommissioned officers (NCO)). It contributes to force readiness by assisting our airmen in attaining a higher level of skill and management proficiency. This core group of young airmen will one day become our Senior NCOs responsible for leading and developing other young airmen as well as advis-

ing Air Force leaders. MilTA has historically cost more than budgeted, and we fund it in execution years to maintain the commitment to our airmen. In the current fiscal environment, we must establish updated enrollment and compensation controls in the MilTA program to sustain the programmed budget.

RETENTION, RECRUITMENT, BONUSES, AND INCENTIVE PAYS

The Air Force continues to successfully attract, assess and retain innovative airmen to maintain our status as the world's preeminent aerospace nation. The Service has consistently met its accession goals since 1999 and this positive trend continued through fiscal year 2012. Our recruiting strategy is founded on a powerful organization and network of professional recruiters in communities across the country supported by a compelling, multi-layered, local, regional and national marketing campaign. In the recovering economy, the Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) is predicting challenging recruiting conditions from fiscal year 2013 through fiscal year 2016. We are projecting enlisted accession requirements will reduce by 2,661 to 26,376 for fiscal year 2013 and then stabilize at 27,085 in fiscal year 2014. The Air Force strategy to sustaining an All-Voluntary Force includes: Maintaining a Strong and Experienced Recruiter Force; Understanding the Recruiting Environment; leveraging the Power of Marketing; and leveraging Technology and Information Systems to Improve the Mission.

The AFRS' success is partially attributed to its advertising and marketing campaign that targets America's best and brightest youth across a broad slice with respect to race, gender, geography and socio-economic background. We are projecting a \$63 million advertising budget for fiscal year 2014—\$6 million less than this year's budget. Air Force advertising and marketing strategies continue to attract quality recruits as validated by our recent success in recruiting 99.5 percent of our enlisted accessions (EA) as high school graduates (HSG) while 98.4 percent of our EA scored in the top three mental categories (CAT I to IIIA) of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB). Our fiscal year 2012 EA production quality outpaced the Department of Defense (DOD) standards of 90 percent HSG and 60 percent for CAT I to IIIA. The Initial Enlistment Bonus (IEB) program ensured AFRS recruited 100 percent of all critical skills accessions. We used the IEB program to target nine career fields for 6-year enlistments with the majority of these being Battlefield Airmen such as Combat Control and Pararescue. Our programmed budget for IEB is \$14.5 million in fiscal year 2014. We expect the fiscal year 2014 IEB career fields will continue to focus primarily on Battlefield Airmen.

The Air Force Reserve (AFR) will continue to focus on filling geo-specific vacancies in critical skills needed to ensure wartime capability. In fiscal year 2012, the AFR accessed 9,429 personnel against a goal of 9,229 obtaining 102 percent of their fiscal year 2012 recruiting goal. The AFR is projecting to finish at 100.3 percent of their 8,900 fiscal year 2013 recruiting goal and their fiscal year 2014 goal is also expected to be approximately 8,900.

The Air National Guard (ANG) achieved 100.7 percent of their officer and enlisted goal in 2012. They are on pace to meet their 11,600 (10,500 enlisted/1,100 officer) goal for 2013. However, the ANG is experiencing a percentage of losses not seen since 1989, as well as multiple mission changes across the country as a result of the 2013 NDAA.

ANG Incentive Program is a national program designed to attract and retain quality personnel in critical enlisted and officer career fields, with additional focus on Health Professionals (HP) and Chaplains. Other targeted commissioned career fields include Engineering, Intelligence, Cyber and Battlefield Airmen. The enlisted accession and reenlistment bonuses focus on critical skills within Aircraft Maintenance, Intelligence, Civil Engineering, Medical, and Battlefield Airmen. This effort includes a Local Program designed to assist units in recruiting and retaining personnel in critical enlisted and officer career fields, by wing and geographically separated unit.

The ANG's fiscal year 2013 Incentive Program Budget is \$88.5 million for Recruiting and Retention and includes HP Bonus, HP and Chaplain Loan Repayment, Officer Accession and Affiliation, Enlistment, and Reenlistment Bonuses. Funding covers initial payments for new contracts and anniversary must-pays for prior year contracts. The fiscal year 2014 Incentive Program budget of \$65.2 million continues to target all critical skills and professional officer specialties.

Overall, our Active component officer force continued to experience strong retention in 2012 with an average career length (ACL) of 14.8 years of service, a value just slightly below the all-time high of 15.9 in 2010—the highest since tracking began in 1993. Despite high retention trends, however, there are pockets of concern for our stressed career fields. Currently, 11 out of 96 officer career fields, 6 pilot

and combat systems officer career fields and 5 Special Operations Forces (SOF) and non-rated career fields, are stressed with high operational demand, low manning and insufficient retention. To stem attrition, we are excluding all stressed career fields when possible from targeted voluntary and involuntary Force Management programs in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014. Where necessary, we will add accessions and retrainees to stressed career fields to increase overall inventory and bring undermanned year-groups closer to required levels. Additionally, we offer Aviator Retention Bonuses and Critical Skills Retention Bonuses (CSRB) to specific skills and year groups in our stressed career fields to include Combat Rescue, Special Tactics, and Contracting officers.

Enlisted force retention rates remained high for the third year in a row; however, retention is still problematic for certain skills and year groups. Currently, 13 out of 329 enlisted career fields, specifically Battlefield Airmen, Intelligence, and Career Enlisted Aviator career fields, are stressed with high operational demand, low manning and insufficient retention. The Selective Reenlistment Bonus (SRB) continues to be the most effective, responsive and measurable tool for retention, encouraging airmen to stay and/or retrain into career fields with high demand requirements. Additionally, CSRB remains a vital tool to retain Senior Noncommissioned Officers (SNCO) in certain high-demand specialties experiencing manning shortfalls, and high operational demand.

The fiscal year 2013 budget for all Special and Incentive Pay is \$926.5 million, with recruiting and retention pays accounting for \$420.4 million. The remaining \$506.1 million of the total budget pays for health profession incentive pay, flying duty pay, hazardous duty pay and other special pays, such as Special Duty Assignment Pay and Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus/Pay. The Air Force allocated \$232 million of the Special and Incentive Pay budget in fiscal year 2013 for SRBs for 55 Air Force specialties, up slightly from 53 specialties at the end of fiscal year 2012 but down considerably from 78 specialties at the beginning of fiscal year 2012.

The fiscal year 2014 budget for all Special and Incentive Pay is \$894.2 million, with recruiting and retention pays accounting for \$412.5 million. The remaining \$481.7 million of the total budget pays for health profession incentive pay, flying duty pay, hazardous duty pay and other special pays, such as Special Duty Assignment Pay and Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus/Pay. The Air Force allocated \$232 million of the Special and Incentive Pay budget in fiscal year 2014 for SRBs and will continue to focus on Battlefield Airmen; Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance; and Career Enlisted Aviator career fields. SRB investments have shown to improve retention from 1 to 8 percent per SRB increment, depending on the reenlistment zone.

OPERATIONAL RESERVE

The Air Force has successfully employed the Operational Reserve concept for more than 2 decades. During this timeframe, the three components (Active, Air Force Reserve, and Air National Guard) have become an increasingly integrated force fully capable of supporting combatant commander requirements as a single seamless team. Continued expansion of Total Force associations will further enhance the operational effectiveness of the forces provided to combatant commanders. Under this concept, the components routinely train together at home station, which allows individual members of all three components to develop effective working relationships and team cohesiveness prior to deploying. Additionally, they develop an understanding and appreciation of the strengths (and inherent limitations) of each component.

Looking to the future, the Secretary and Chief of Staff of the Air Force have chartered the Total Force Task Force to take a holistic approach to provide strategic options on the appropriate Total Force capabilities mix to meet current and future Air Force requirements. Three Major Generals (one from each component) will be leading this effort. The task force will consider the strategic shifts driven by post-Afghanistan reconstitution and the new Defense Strategic Guidance. The expectation is for the task force to recommend policy, legislation, personnel, organizational, and force structure changes that would maximize the overall effectiveness of the Air Force's total force team in a budget-constrained environment.

Our Total Force Air Force will continue to be structured on a balanced foundation that relies on the strengths of each component, to provide and sustain the capabilities required in the years ahead. Total Force Task Force recommendations anchored on this principle will inform the Air Force Strategic Planning and Programming Process for fiscal year 2015 and beyond.

The Secretary of Defense recently approved the Air Force policy and procedures for Reserve involuntary mobilization authority under title 10 U.S.C. §§ 12304a and

12304b. The Air Force is prepared to implement § 12304a to involuntarily access the Air Force Reserve if needed to respond to a major disaster or emergency within the United States. We are working closely with the Air National Guard and Air Force Reserve to develop the plans and specific missions where it may be necessary to augment the Active component for preplanned missions using § 12304b involuntary mobilization authority. We will apply this authority judiciously in order to ensure predictability for Reserve component members to minimize the impact to their families and employers. Appropriate use of this authority is being considered as we develop the Air Force input to the fiscal year 2015 President's budget.

SUPPORT TO AIRMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES

The Air Force will continue to prioritize quality airmen and family support programs to sustain the resiliency of our force. Our strategy to meet the Service's evolving demographics and demands is to tailor or eliminate services where appropriate and capitalize upon community resources to gain efficiencies where possible.

Our Airman and Family Readiness Centers (A&FRC) have made considerable progress implementing the Transition Assistance Program (TAP) requirements that will expand training and employment services for our Active and Reserve component members who transition from the military. The Air Force was compliant with the Veterans Opportunity to Work (VOW) To Hire Heroes Act of 2011 as mandated by law on 21 November 2012 and is on schedule for compliance with the Veterans Employment Initiative (VEI) Task Force goals by 1 October 2013. In support of VEI, the Air Force was the first service to pilot the redesigned 5-day TAP workshop and the Higher Education optional track at Joint Base San Antonio (JBSA) and the first to pilot the Small Business Administration's Entrepreneurship track Outside the Continental United States (OCONUS) at Royal Air Force Mildenhall, United Kingdom. During fiscal year 2013, all Air Force installations will complete the rollout with the addition of three 2-day tracks of Entrepreneurship, Technical Training, and Education and a Capstone ensuring that members are ready to make a successful civilian transition.

In fiscal year 2012, Air Force Child Development Programs supported more than 61,000 children ages 6 weeks to 12 years, with over 4,600 of these children having special needs care requirements. We have continued to focus on increasing our care capacity in our Child Development Centers, adding 5,794 childcare spaces from fiscal year 2005 to fiscal year 2012. The Air Force also participated in piloting the first centralized web-based DOD request for childcare system, which will provide our families with easier access to DOD-wide childcare options.

We are concerned about the effect Sequestration will have on our Child and Youth Programs in fiscal year 2013 due to potential Appropriated Fund (APF) civilian furloughs. The furlough of Child Care support staff could impact approximately 25 percent of our caregiving staff as well as our entire management and administrative team, who are charged with ensuring health and safety standards are maintained. To maintain these mandated standards, installations may be forced to reduce hours of operation or reduce class sizes, which may require single and dual working parents to adjust their work hours or find alternative care off base at a higher cost. Reduced staffing and construction project delays could also stall the opening of approximately 750 childcare spaces that are currently in different phases of construction. Due to limited off-base childcare options (particularly for infants and toddlers at many locations), the result may be growing on-base child care waiting lists at a time when community-based funding for such programs has simultaneously been cut.

The Air Force is equally committed to supporting Child and Youth programs that are designed for the unique requirements of our ANG and AFR members. The Home Community Care (HCC) Program continues to provide ANG and AFR members access to quality childcare services that are similar to those available to military assigned to or living on a military installation and provides free quality childcare during primary drill weekends. In 2012, HCC provided care for 7,632 children within 35 ANG and AFR units with 59 State licensed providers.

Recognizing our recent funding challenges and the evolving demographics and lifestyles of today's airmen and families, we are reviewing all Family and Morale, Welfare and Recreation (MWR) programs through customer satisfaction surveys and business analysis. Our goal is to determine how best to provide family and MWR programs and base-level support services in today's budget-constrained environment. For instance, we are focusing our resources on those core programs (ex: Food, Fitness, Child and Youth Programs) which best support ready, resilient airman and may be forced to make hard decisions to not fully support other programs (ex: Libraries, Outdoor Recreation). To support this initiative, we launched our Services

Transformation Project (STP) in July 2011 to conduct an Air Force-wide program business assessment of base-level service and support, MWR programs. Major Commands (MAJCOM) and installations were provided STP business assessment results with proposals to keep, divest or repurpose programs. These assessments contributed to Wing Commander decisions to eliminate 22 programs at various installations. Additionally, a STP team visited 8 test bases making recommendations to create Community Commons and Information Learning Centers among other recommendations that will combine MWR programs into a central location.

Airmen and family quality of life is also significantly enhanced by the contributions of our non-pay programs. The Army Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) provides merchandise at an average savings of 24 percent compared to similar retail stores and gave back \$223.9 million in dividend contributions to military communities in fiscal year 2012. Additionally, the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA) operates as a nonprofit organization and can save a family of four an estimated \$4,500 a year.

COMPREHENSIVE AIRMAN AND FAMILY FITNESS

The Focus of Comprehensive Airman and Fitness (CAF) is building resilience among our Total Force airmen and their families. While we have completed our mission in Iraq, airmen are still in Afghanistan where they have been for more than 10 years and in the Middle East for over 20 years. Continued high operations tempo at home and abroad coupled with downsizing the force and budget cuts stress the need to deliberately increase our focus on building strong, resilient airmen and families. Resilient airmen are better equipped to withstand, recover and/or grow in the face of stressors and changing demands. Many of our programs are designed to continue to build resilient airmen and families.

The planned way-ahead for 2013 through 2014 includes the development of a Virtual Wing-Man smart phone application, continued production of Master Resilience Trainers (MRT) and the rigorous analysis of scientific data collected to validate the effectiveness of the MRT training on First Term Airmen Center (FTAC) students.

SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION AND RESPONSE

The Air Force remains steadfast in our commitment to prevent incidents of sexual assault, provide victim care where assault has occurred and hold accountable those who commit such acts, while protecting the due process rights of the accused. Our current and ongoing initiatives to achieve a zero tolerance environment are targeted toward prevention (dissuade, deter, and detect) and response (victim care and responsibility).

In fiscal year 2013, we stood up our first of several Integrated Product Team meetings, incorporating university experts and other subject matter experts, to assess our pre-command, senior enlisted and entry-level SAPR education and training curricula with the goal to make it more relevant, impactful and reality based. Increased emphasis on Investigations and Accountability included an Advanced Air Force Sexual Assault Investigations course and Special Victims' Counsel "Pilot" program to provide representation and advocacy throughout the investigation and prosecution processes by a specially trained Judge Advocate.

The Air Force also distributed a Wing Commander's SAPR Guide, developed by subject matter experts and Wing Commanders and Command Chiefs. The guide includes statistics, facts and talking points to help installation leaders encourage healthy conversations with their airmen. It was distributed to installation commanders, MAJCOM commanders, six area of responsibility commanders, and the ANG. DOD SAPRO recognized this guide for how well it was done.

In March 2013, HQ Air Force Office of Special Investigations (AFOSI) published new policy guidance to improve the investigation of sexual assault offenses. One change directs Command-wide use of AFOSI's new Sexual Assault Investigative Plan Worksheet and Sufficiency Assessment Tool in drafting written investigative plans. The tool will help focus collaboration between agents and military justice attorneys, as it integrates legal sufficiency (Articles 120, 125, and 80 elements of proof) with investigative sufficiency (i.e. investigative activities apt to reveal information probative to the elements). Additionally, HQ AFOSI has equipped its field units with cutting-edge alternate light sources to greatly enhance agents' ability to detect the presence of forensic evidence at sexual assault crime scenes. The field was also armed with new cyber tools that significantly improved agents' ability to identify and collect probative information from computers and cell phones.

The Air Force is assessing manpower requirements needed to execute fiscal year 2012 and projected NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 requirements. Our goal is to increase manpower in policy oversight, education and training and legal/investigation roles.

We will comply with the requirements by establishing at least one full time Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Coordinator (SARC) and one full time Victim Advocate (VA) at each Air force host wing. Additionally, we are going a step further by placing additional SARCs or VAs at larger installations and those with higher risk populations (such as our training bases), while also providing a capacity for supporting expeditionary requirements. We have created standardized position descriptions for SARCs and VAs to facilitate hiring, and we are continuing efforts toward SARC and VA certification by 1 October 2013.

The Air Force SAPR office utilized the Unit Climate Assessment (UCA), a known commander's management tool, to proactively assess climate for Air Force individual units. Embedded in the Air Force Climate Assessment are six questions that illuminate four dimensions of the SAPR climate factors. These Air Force climate factors and results detailed areas for further work in 2013 and beyond, namely more information geared towards junior enlisted, civilians and lessening the barriers to reporting. Additionally, the UCA revealed that our Bystander Intervention training and reporting options are both understood and found to be highly viable tools. In 2013, we will launch a follow-on survey to the initial 2010 Gallup survey which established a baseline measurement of actual prevalence and incidence of sexual assault in the Air Force. This repeat measurement will be compared to our baseline data to assess the progress of our SAPR program. As we move forward with our program, ongoing biannual measurement and tracking will allow the Air Force to continue monitoring changes and improvements.

HAZING

The Air Force has a zero tolerance policy for hazing, bullying, maltreatment, and discrimination as it is contrary to the standards of conduct that we expect of all airmen—entitling every airman to dignity, respect, and equal opportunity. Guided by our core values of Integrity, Service and Excellence, the Air Force utilizes a comprehensive approach to prevent and/or respond to such allegations or observations. We believe that using a comprehensive, continual training approach throughout an airman's career not only ensures that these concepts and preventative measures are delivered at the right time, but more importantly, become part of the Air Force culture and help to ensure good order and discipline. If an allegation of hazing is substantiated, it may be punishable by court-martial or nonjudicial punishment under several punitive Articles of the Uniform Code of Military Justice.

INTEGRATION OF AIR FORCE COMPONENT PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT

To better support our airmen and families, we continue to move forward with our "3 to 1 Total Force Personnel Management" initiative. This effort integrates personnel management policies, processes and procedures across the Active, Reserve, and Air National Guard components to create a more efficient and effective Air Force.

In May 2012, we successfully completed a high level review of all laws, regulations and policies to determine where barriers to integration existed. This review yielded 69 recommendations, spanning over two dozen human resource activities. We learned that few legal barriers exist to the integration of Air Force Human Resource policies, but there are many opportunities for us to consolidate directives and instructions, while still allowing for component uniqueness where warranted. This will pave the way for significant process improvement, facilitate better collaboration and coordination across Air Force components, optimize warfighter support and improve service levels for our airmen.

A few examples of change include the establishment of a Total Force Recruiting Council which is analyzing consolidated storefronts and conducting a Total Force review of schoolhouse curriculum; the implementation of enlisted performance reports for Traditional Guardsmen; process and training enhancements to remedy issues associated with transition between components; and the deployment of an electronic operating support system for our Total Force promotion and force development board processes. This will transition manual and cumbersome paper boards to a new technology that will garner significant efficiencies in the coming years.

Finally, the most significant outcome from this effort to date is the institution of a Total Force Human Resource Management governance structure which stood up on 1 April 2013. For the first time in our Air Force's history, we will have a unified Total Force forum where we can discuss challenges and shape shared solutions towards a common Total Force human capital strategy.

DIVERSITY

The Air Force recognizes a diverse force is a military necessity and we continue to focus efforts on advancing our strategic priorities of institutionalizing diversity, attracting, recruiting, developing and retaining a diverse and inclusive workforce of highly qualified total force individuals who reflect the rich tapestry of the Nation we serve.

Over the past 2 years, we have made significant progress in our efforts to execute these priorities. First, in response to the Presidential Executive Order (13583) establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, we recently updated our Diversity Strategic Roadmap. The Roadmap is an action plan that directly supports Air Force diversity objectives and is designed to move us forward in key areas essential for success and posture us to compete for a finite pool of candidates in a changing nation. Additionally, in July 2012, the Air Force published Air Force Instruction 36-7001, Diversity, which provides policy and oversight for Air Force Diversity and guidance for its implementation within the Air Force.

Outreach programs remain key to attracting and recruiting diverse talent. In partnership with the Office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, our sister services and Air Force total force stakeholders (active duty, Guard, Reserve and civilian service), the Air Force plans, coordinates and provides oversight to national-level diversity outreach programs supporting our priorities, goals and objectives. In fiscal year 2012, our Global Diversity Division collaborated with the AFRS to conduct a targeted advertising campaign aimed at attracting high performing African American and Hispanic students who might qualify for U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) or Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps programs. In fact, the recruiting service devoted 20 percent of its fiscal year 2012 marketing budget to initiatives targeting specific minority communities (African American and Hispanic) to locate high performing applicants and counter cultural biases against military service.

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY

The USAFA continues to thrive as a world-class university, creating strong leaders of character that are prepared for today's strategic environment that includes a broad range of threats and an unpredictable set of challenges.

USAFA cadets have performed impressively over the past 12 months. The graduating class of 2013 has a Marshall Scholar and the U.S. News and World report ranked USAFA's undergraduate management program #1 in the Nation. The Academy's undergraduate engineering program is ranked #4 in the Nation, civil and computer engineering programs are ranked #5 nationally, and USAFA has the #2 air and space engineering program for the 12th consecutive year.

Respect for human dignity and integrity are at the core of the USAFA's leadership development. The Academy continues to enhance sexual assault prevention and response programs by identifying new ways to advance a climate of dignity and respect, and to more completely integrate sexual assault, harassment and violence prevention into Academy life and learning. Additionally, the Academy continues to conduct Religious Respect Training which is receiving national attention as a benchmark program.

USAFA is committed to recruiting a diverse force and its numerous recruitment efforts and programs such as Summer Seminar, Diversity Visitation, and Admissions Forum have succeeded in many aspects and serve as the foundation for future efforts. The Summer Seminar Program targets high performing, diverse students who would be USAFA direct entry, USAFA Prep-School or Falcon Foundation candidates. The Diversity Visitation Program brings prospective minority cadets to the Academy for a 4-day program, which includes academics, interaction with senior leaders, tours of the Prep School and airfield and attendance at a sporting event. The USAFA Admissions Forum Initiative conducts up to ten admissions events per year in strategically selected locations across the country that have under-representation of target populations at the USAFA.

WOUNDED WARRIORS

The Air Force is dedicated to continuously improving the support to our combat and seriously wounded, ill, and injured airmen by leveraging prior Air Force investments including the Recovery Care and Coordinator Program (RCCs). In fiscal year 2012 the Air Staff, Air Force Personnel Center and Office of Surgeon General jointly planned and reengineered the Air Force Recovery Coordination Process to integrate the medical and nonmedical care of all Air Force wounded, ill, and injured into one

7-phased Continuum of Care process. This initiative eliminated redundancies and minimized confusion for our recovering airmen and their families. This effort produced a single centralized and coordinated line of command for operations and a decentralized execution process. In addition, a singular referral and identification process was implemented for determining eligibility for these specialized services and added to the combat ill and injured population, the management of care for all seriously ill and injured. This design approach relates to airmen's perspective by better meeting their anticipated needs in advance and leading to improved sustained care. The Recovery Team now provides concentrated care while simultaneously providing services to all current ill and injured and results in a 30 percent reduced active case load ratio to the current 45/1 (40/1 is DOD standard). As a result, the AF now manages this population in an improved and inclusive process, which currently stands at 2,583 (498 ill; 1,299 psychological; 786 injured [including TBI]). Of this total population 1,048 are still on active duty and 1,535 have separated from the AF. In summary, the AF focuses its support of airmen and their families through medical and non-medical programs on behalf of DOD and in coordination with the VA as follows:

- DOD Medical Support: Clinical Care & Case Management
- Line Non-Medical Support: Directorate of Airman & Family Care and Recovery Care Coordinators
- VA Support: Poly Trauma Centers, Case Management & Federal Recovery Coordinators

Air Force sponsored, along with other Services, Adaptive Sports Camps to assist recovering airmen to heal not only physical, but socially, emotionally and spiritually. Warrior Game participation has grown from 27 to more than 100 new athletes in fiscal year 2012 and 50 participants have been selected for the 2013 Air Force Wounded Warrior Games team. In addition to Warrior Game participation, the Air Force purchased adaptive sports equipment now located in its fitness centers and established a dedicated adaptive sports staff under the new Air Force Wounded Warrior directorate to host advanced adaptive sports and recreation camps and clinics. As simply put by AF Staff Sgt. Larry Franklin, a program participant, "This program saved my life. Being part of a team again gives me a sense of pride and makes me feel like I'm a part of something."

AIR FORCE YELLOW RIBBON PROGRAM

The Air Force Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) has promoted the well-being of Air National Guard and Air Reserve airmen and their families. Driven by high tempo deployment cycles, these events have taken on an increased importance given the increased accumulated stress on our ARC airmen and their families. The events, offered at key stages in the deployment cycle, have clearly addressed the need for the providing critical support information to family members and more importantly, given the multiple deployments, supported the build-up of resilience skills to better cope with the significant stress on families caused by absence of their airmen.

The value-added propositions of these events, which further allow for the development of inter-family support teams, cannot be overstated. Many of these ARC units are not in close proximity to Active Air Force airmen and family care centers, so the YRRP events serve as form of resilience support and training.

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

The purpose of the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES) is to maintain a fit and vital force. Air Force uses the IDES to determine if airmen who are wounded, ill, or injured are still fit for continued military service and quickly returns those who are. If they are deemed unfit for continued service, the IDES process ensures servicemembers receive a Veteran's Affairs (VA) disability rating and are aware of their compensation and benefits before they transition from military service. We are aggressively working to meet OSD's goal to process airmen through the IDES in 295 days. Currently, the Air Force Active component is averaging 362 days processing time from referral for disability evaluation to the date of VA benefits decision or return to duty. Within the IDES, the Medical Evaluation Board (MEB) phase performance is averaging 63 days, which is well below the IDES goal of 100 days. However, the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) phase is averaging 141 days, which falls short of the IDES 120-day goal.

The Air Force is committed to improving IDES timeliness to better serve airmen as they rehabilitate, reintegrate or transition from military service. We are diligently working various measures to improve the IDES timeliness. We have re-aligned manpower and made hiring a priority within the Air Force Personnel Center

to assist the PEB. The Air Force has partnered with OSD and the VA to enhance IDES information technology (IT) to create a seamless and integrated system to improve IDES timeliness. While DOD and VA develop an enterprise IT solution, the Air Force is exploring short-term IT solutions to expedite the transfer of IDES cases between the Military Treatment Facilities (MTFs) and the Informal and Formal PEBs. In addition, we have improved communications between the VA, the Air Force Personnel Center, and the Air Force Surgeon General to ensure consistency of IDES tracked data. Finally, the Air Force rolled out its IDES pre-screening initiative to ensure the right airmen are referred into the IDES. The IDES pre-screen process provides a centralized review at the Air Force Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards Branch of potential IDES cases which may not meet retention standards. The intent of the pre-screening process is two-fold, to identify airmen who may be returned to duty (RTD), instead of entering the IDES, thus preserving resources and reducing hardship on the airman and the unit. Additionally, the process identifies airmen, who need a complete Medical Evaluation Board, and refers them to the IDES, preserving readiness and a fit force. The pre-screening process does not alter any stage of the IDES, airmen rights remain intact and the Air Force ensures due-diligence. As of 10 April 2013, the Informal PEB adjudicated 978 cases referred into the IDES by our Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards shop as a result of pre-screening. Of those, only 27 were returned to duty by the Informal PEB, for a 2.7 percent RTD rate, far below the 15–20 percent RTD rate historically seen prior to pre-screening implementation. We expect these major improvement strategies to improve the Air Force IDES timeliness by fall 2013.

On 13 June 2012, former Secretary of Defense, Leon Panetta, directed the Department to conduct a comprehensive review of mental health diagnoses for prior servicemembers who completed a disability evaluation process from 11 Sep 2001 to 30 Apr 2012. The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness is the delegated authority to establish the Special Review Panel as a collaborative undertaking of the DOD Physical Disability Board of Review (PDBR) and the Military Department Boards for Correction of Military Records. These reviews will include a re-evaluation of servicemember records whose mental health diagnoses were changed to their possible disadvantage during the disability evaluation process. The PDBR has coordinated with the Services and has defined the resources required for the timely completion of these important reviews.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Air Force leaders at all levels are committed to suicide prevention through our wingman culture. We do not view suicide prevention as belonging to either personnel or medical communities, but to all members of the Air Force community, including commanders, supervisors, and peers. Suicide prevention is a Total Force responsibility. This is the premise upon which our Community Action Information Board (CAIB) was built and the cornerstone of the Air Force suicide prevention program as we established it in 1996. We believe evidence shows it is the necessary framework for effective intervention across the enterprise. Prevention starts with leadership involvement from the top down and across all spectrums of the Air Force.

In a wingman culture, airmen look out for fellow airmen. We teach them to identify risk factors and warning signs for suicide, and to take appropriate action once these indicators are identified. We call it: Ask, Care, Escort (ACE). We have taken Air Force-wide training to a new level with required Frontline Supervisor Training for the highest risk career fields. We are increasing our mental health provider staffing across the Air Force by more than 300 professionals by 2016. All of our mental health providers are trained to use the Air Force Guide to Managing Suicidal Behavior, a clinical guide for assessing, managing and treating suicidal ideation.

Within the Air Force, we have not seen a link between suicide and deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or Traumatic Brain Injury. For our Total Force, the most frequently linked risk factors to suicide continue to be relationship problems, legal or administrative problems, work related issues, or a combination of these factors.

We are keenly focused on reducing stigma through positive commander messages and by expanding opportunities to access mental health resources such as embedding mental health providers in our primary care clinics. Although the 2012 Air Force Climate Survey found stigma is still an issue for many airmen, we are encouraged that most reported they are willing to seek help, and 90 percent see leadership as genuinely interested in preventing suicide.

We continue to research how we can better identify those at risk for suicide to achieve the earliest possible intervention. One such study explores how airmen's use of social media impacts their relationships, help-seeking, and emotional well-being.

We are also conducting research that examines the role of life events and social stressors in the suicides of specific clusters of airmen.

In addition, we continue to collaborate with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office, our sister Services, and the Department of Veterans Affairs to leverage the full extent of our internal resources, combining our experiences and best practices to improve our suicide prevention efforts.

CONCLUSION

Our airmen and their families will always remain as the cornerstone to the success of the U.S. Air Force. The enduring contributions provided by Air Force airpower are a direct result of the innovative spirit that resides in all our airmen. Investments in our Air Force capabilities are inextricably linked to our Service's ability to recruit, train, develop, support and retain a world-class, All-Volunteer Force. We are confident that our Air Force will continue to overcome any challenge or adversary if we, as a Service and a Nation, keep faith with our commitment to train and equip the highest quality airmen.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you all for your statements. We have also received a statement for the record from the National Guard Association of the United States. Without objection, it will be included in the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
PETER J. DUFFY
DIRECTOR, LEGISLATION
NATIONAL GUARD ASSOCIATION OF THE UNITED STATES
BEFORE THE
UNITED STATES SENATE MILITARY PERSONNEL SUBCOMMITTEE OF
THE SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE
24 April 2013**

Chairwoman Gillibrand, Ranking Member Graham, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on behalf of the National Guard Association of the United States to address critical personnel issues facing members of the National Guard and their families. It will provide factual background, analysis and recommendations for the Committee to consider.

The Unique Citizen Service Member

The National Guard is unique among components of the Department of Defense in that it has a dual state and federal mission. While serving in a Title 10 active duty status such as Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), National Guard units are under the command and control of the President. Upon release from active duty, members of the National Guard return to all parts of their home states under the command and control of their governors where they train, not only for their federal missions, but for their state missions such as fire fighting, flood response and providing assistance to civil authorities in a variety of possible security and disaster scenarios.

While serving in their states, members are scattered geographically with their families as they hold jobs, own businesses, pursue academic programs and participate actively in their civilian communities.

Military service in the National Guard is uniquely “community based”. The culture of the National Guard remains little understood outside of its own circles. When the Department of Defense testifies before Congress to present its programmatic needs, it will likely recognize the indispensable role of the National Guard as a vital “Operational Force” but it will say little about the benefit disparities, training challenges and unmet medical readiness issues that exist for National Guard members and their families at home. These conditions exist before, during and after deployment. The National Guard Association of the United States asks this Subcommittee to recognize the value of the National Guard in a budget short environment and understand that the personnel issues of the National Guard are different from those of the active forces, and in some cases radically so. We ask that they be given a fresh look with the best interests of the National Guard members and their families in mind in reviewing the recommendations set forth below.

Future Roles, Missions and Structure of the National Guard

Secretary of Defense Chuck Hagel has directed a Strategic Choices and Management Review of the Defense Department to examine the utilization of resources and structure within the Department of Defense in the modern era of evolving strategic asymmetric threats in a and budget challenged environment. Deputy Defense Secretary Ashton Carter will lead the effort with assistance from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Martin Dempsey.

It is essential that the Adjutants General and council of Governors National Guard be involved in key processes within and without the Pentagon in any bottom up review process examining the roles, missions and force structure of the National Guard. Without active participating as the key stakeholders in the processes that will form recommendations going forward on these issues, the National Guard would passively bear the consequences of recommendations relative to the National Guard borne of assumptions lacking a factual basis that too often emerge from closed rooms.

The reckless recommendations made by the Air Force in 2012 to slash equipment from the Air National Guard unsupported by data and devoid of reasoned input from the Adjutants General and Council of Governors underscore this message.

In reviewing the President's Budget and entertaining testimony on the future force mix of the military that may follow, please find for your review and future reference a link to an independently written discussion paper titled "[National Defense in a Time of Change](#)" published as part of The Hamilton Project by the Brookings Institution. The paper offers cogent recommendations for potential defense budget savings of \$500 billion over 10 years.

Authors Adm. Gary Roughhead, U.S. Navy (Ret.) and Kori Schake, both of the Hoover Institution, recommend a redesign of the military's force structure (page 13): "We must redesign our forces and budget to our strategy, and not to equal service share between branches.... Putting more of the responsibilities for ground combat into the combat-proven reserve component is both consistent with the new demands of the evolving international order and justified by the superb performance of National Guard and reserve units in our recent wars."

Although Roughhead and Schake believe that the current structure of the Navy and /Air Force would meet their redesign needs, they assert that Congress must reduce the current Army by 200,000 from 490,000 while adding "100,000 reservists and National Guardsmen closely entwined in the regular rotation whose principal mission would be arriving in a mature theater for sustained combat."

On page 14, Roughhead and Schake cite the drag arising from the 781,960 civilians currently employed by DoD and the resulting inefficiencies arising from an over reliance on private contractors. "If the military cannot deploy or sustain he fight without those contractors market pressures will bid up the cost of civilian contractors until the cost advantage is negligible. In fact, we are probably beyond that cost point. We would reduce

civilian personnel by a greater proportion than uniform reductions.” (According to Bloomberg, DoD currently employs 700,000 private contractors with nearly 5,000 working in the office of the Secretary of Defense alone).

Please also find links to the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) report showing the fully burdened life cycle costs of the Reserve components to be less than one third per capita those of the active forces and to a summary RFPB transmittal letter to the Secretary of Defense whose office had requested the report.

Lastly, please find a link to the National Guard Association's RFPB Fact Sheet, which we feel sums up the above issues.

Thank you for your consideration of these studies.

Funding authorized mental health programs

In the numerous post mortem articles emerging at the ten year anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, major media acquiescing in Department of Defense data routinely reported that there were 33,000 serious injuries arising from OIF.

However, data gathered by the Rand Corporation in a study on the “Invisible Wounds of War” published in 2008 reported then approximately 300,000 veterans of OIF and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) suffered from PTSD or major depression and about 320,000 veterans then reported a probable Traumatic Brain Injury during deployment. These numbers would only have increased since then. Sadly, these injuries are not considered “serious” although for many the effect will be debilitating lifelong.

Suicides throughout the military and among veterans continue at an alarming near epidemic rate. The Army reported for 2012 a record 325 potential or confirmed suicides, with 96 of those occurring in the Army National Guard and 47 Army Reserve. The Army number exceeds the 219 Army deaths in operation Iraqi Freedom. The VA reports that 22 veterans take their lives daily.

Congress’ previous efforts to deal with Reserve Component (RC) suicides, however well intended, have fallen short because of critical funding errors. In 2011, Congress passed Section 703 of the National Defense Authorization Act for 2012 NDAA for fiscal year 2012 which amended 10 USC 1074a by authorizing the Secretary of Defense to embed mental health professionals to provide RC members with ready access to screening and treatment during unit training assemblies. Section 703 further authorized the Secretary of Defense to conduct suicide prevention and post suicide response training for the RC.

However, during the opaque 2012 NDAA joint conferencing process, the conferees switched funding of the embed program from the flush Defense Health Programs(DHP) to the limited and fully accounted for RC Operations and Maintenance (O&M) accounts. This funding decision kept the embed programs from being implemented in the at risk

states in most need. Adding insult to injury, DHP turned in nearly \$800 million of unspent funds at the end of fiscal year 2012 after turning in a like amount in 2011.

The National Guard Bureau (NGB) Director of Psychological Health (DPH) had actively supported the embed program in the 2012 NDAA which, in California, had proven its effectiveness overcoming geographical, temporal and stigma barriers by giving drilling Guard members ready access to known and trusted mental health professionals during drills via command direction or self referrals. Sadly, the insertion of "O&M" funding in Section 703 crippled the efforts of the NGB DPH to establish embed programs in the states that would need it most. The approximately 96 Army Guard suicides in 2012 and bereft families bear witness.

The 2013 NDAA recently authorized a pilot for NGB to establish long sought after community mental health programs. Although the DPH for NGB has developed the contract and methodology for implementing the pilot, she again needs the money.

Importance

- National Guard and Reserve personnel in states at high risk for suicide and dangerous behavioral health conditions need convenient access to community based mental health professionals for screening, care and referrals.
- On site access to embedded mental health professional during training assemblies has proven successful in overcoming geographical, stigma and time barriers that might otherwise bar a member from similar services in a rural or underserved community.

Recommendation

- The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to fence no less than \$ 30 million for the National Guard Bureau Director of Psychological Health (DPH) to use to establish embedded mental health providers authorized by the 2012 NDAA in states determined by the DPH to be at mental health risk and to fund the community mental health pilot programs established in section 706 of the 2013 NDAA..

Post Deployment Health Assessments and Mandatory Medical Screenings at the Home Station

For much of the war our deployed members were not adequately screened for service connected injuries. The long acknowledged lack of screening puts our Guard veterans at a severe disadvantage when filing veterans' disability compensation claims for war related injuries that were not adequately documented by the services. This is particularly true for Post Traumatic Stress injuries which may not have even presented until well after separation.

The VA acknowledges the processing problem that it has in trying to establish the necessary service connection component relative to injuries for which a Guard veteran seeks compensation that lack a documentation base.

Since 1997, pursuant to 10 USC 1074 f, the Secretary of Defense has been obligated to maintain records in a central location recording the medical condition of members before and after deployment. Unfortunately, that office did not fulfill this obligation for many members of the Guard who find themselves bereft of the needed medical records to support their war related injury claims.

It is imperative post-deployment, that our members while still on active duty deployment orders, be examined confidentially at the home station by qualified health care providers in order to address the under reporting of physical and mental health conditions that occurs on the self administered Post Deployment Health Assessment(PDHA). The PDHA is currently being completed by a homeward-bound member at a demobilization site often several states away from home.

When the PDHA is completed, it is accompanied by the "instruction" that the self assessing member may be "medically held" on active duty at the demobilization site if he or she reports a medical condition requiring that action. To avoid the risk of being held at the demobilization site after a long deployment, members are simply not fully reporting their physical and behavioral injuries. This under-reporting not only delays treatment but can prejudice later claims with the VA for service connected disabilities arising from conditions not previously reported on the PDHA.

What is needed forthwith is a free and confidential reporting of physical and mental health conditions at the home station by all members, stigma free, to a health care provider trained to elicit that information and to screen for those conditions without the fear of being medically held far from home. If medically holding the member is advisable, it should be done as close to home as possible.

The irony in the current PDHA under-reporting phenomenon is that a medical hold is usually in the best interest of the member and his or her family as it allows pay and benefits to continue during treatment for a condition that may well render the member unemployable once discharged. The medical hold should not cynically be administered as a threat to discourage reporting of injuries when, if properly administered in a friendly environment, it offers substantial benefits to the members and his or her family.

Insurance companies, in performing their due diligence before the issuance of an insurance policy do not allow an applicant's self assessment of health to be the only determinant. Neither should the military. If geographical separation from families is causing under reporting and non-reporting of physical and psychological combat injuries on the PDHA, then moving this process to the home station would likely produce a better yield at a critical time when this information needs to be captured in order for prompt and effective treatment to be administered. If necessary and appropriate, the examining health care provider in coordination with the National Guard J-1 and State's Surgeon

General can cause the member to be retained on active duty locally for further treatment and evaluation.

This is especially critical in screening for behavioral conditions. It is absolutely imperative that members returning from deployment be screened with full confidentiality at the home station while still on active duty by trained and qualified mental health care providers from VA staff and/or qualified health care providers from the civilian community that could include primary care physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners who have training in assessing psychological health presentations. Prompt diagnosis and treatment will help to mitigate the lasting effects of mental illness.

Please see the copy of a November 5, 2008 electronic message to NGAUS from Dr. Dana Headapohl (a practicing occupational physician in Missoula, MT) set forth in the Appendix which strongly recommends a surveillance program for our members before they are released from active duty. Dr. Headapohl opines the obvious in stating that **"...inadequate medical screening of our members before they are released from active duty is "unacceptable to a group that has been asked to sacrifice for our country." (Emphasis added)**

Recommendation:

The National Guard Association of the United States recommends that Congress support authorization and appropriations for programs that will:

- Require the Post Deployment Health Assessment for National Guard members to be administered at the home station before releasing members from active duty
- Mandate medical and behavioral screening of all National Guard members returning from deployment by health care professionals at the home station before releasing the members from active duty.

Modernize Alert Reporting for the National Guard

Unlike officers in the Air Force Reserve who can start drawing pay immediately upon telephonically reporting from their homes for alert or stand by duty, 37 USC 204(c) prohibits alerted Air National Guard (ANG) members from receiving federal pay on orders of 30 days or less until they physically report to their military unit.

This archaic law initiated in 1903 requires alerted National Guard members to travel often considerable distances from their homes to physically report to their units in order to begin federal service and receive pay even though they return immediately thereafter to their homes where they will remain on alert or stand by status.

Many members serving in Air National Guard reside hundreds of miles from their units or even in other states. For ANG members assigned to Alaskan Air National Guard crews who reside in the lower 48 states, physically reporting to the Alaskan unit could involve thousands of miles of unnecessary travel when a simple phone call or electronic message would suffice as it does for the Air Force Reserve.

This double standard for the Air Guard and Air Force Reserve rooted in an obsolete law from horse and buggy days makes no sense today. Moreover, fiscal audits and subsequent penalties for non-compliance with 37 USC 204(c) are increasingly burdensome. The Government Accountability Office Comptroller General has ruled in decision B-152487 that Guardsmen are entitled to federal pays after receiving and complying with telephone orders, from competent authority, to federal service in a stand-by or alert status. <http://www.gao.gov/products/B-152487#mt=e-report>

Importance

- DoD relies on the ANG to efficiently and effectively comply with mission requirements that necessitate Guardsmen starting federal service in a stand-by or alert status.
- It is unnecessary and wasteful to require ANG members to physically report to their military units before returning to their domicile to start alert procedure.
- A double standard should not exist with Air Force Reserve performing the same federal missions being eligible for military pay by simply telephoning their military unit to report for duty.
- Compliance with 37 USC § 204(c) deters voluntary acceptance of missions while being costly, inefficient and avoidable with modern personnel accountability methods that make this 1903 stipulation obsolete.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Amend 37 USC 204(c) to authorize alerted National Guard to report to their units telephonically or electronically to begin federal service and entitlement to federal pay and allowances in an alerted or stand by status.

Reject the recommendation of the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) to cut National Guard drill pay in half

NGAUS welcomed the recommendations from the QRMC released in 2012 that would reduce duty statuses from 30 to six for calling members of the Guard and Reserve to duty, and allow our members to receive their retired pay upon their 30th anniversary of service.

However, the QRMC is totally wrong with its recommendation to cut drill pay in half by equating a drill day with one day of “regular military compensation,” which the QRMC claims would “ensure equitable pay for similar service” with the active component. This reduction of pay would also reduce the number of retirement points earned from four to two for a drill weekend and the retirement pay benefit.

The QRMC discusses the vague possibility of discretionary incentive pay options to bolster a reduction in drill pay should it occur, but those discussions without workable recommendations are illusory. The current drill pay structure is fair and much simpler in comparison.

Unlike the active forces, drilling National Guard members work a 12-day “work week” when a MUTA 4-drill weekend occurs between full-time 40-hour-plus work weeks. They are not compensated for the time and expenses for travel to drills, physical training, medical readiness, family care and performing extensive unit administrative responsibilities.

In assessing equitable pay for similar service, the QRMC ignores the fact that active duty forces in stateside assignments receive full pay and allowances for the customary idle weekends plus 2 ½ days of leave per month. This amounts to full pay for more than one third of a month for down time.

A just and more comprehensive recommendation from the QRMC would have been to keep the current drill pay structure and increase lagging benefits to “ensure equitable pay for similar service.”

Importance

- According to the study released in 2013 of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, the full life cycle costs of the active forces are three times those of the National Guard and Reserve.
- The current superior life cycle cost economies of the National Guard and Reserve compared to the active forces do not require a downward adjustment in pay.
- The needed adjustments to improve economies for maintaining full military capabilities must come from the outmoded active force structures still locked in a Cold War paradigm.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Reject the recommendations from the Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation (QRMC) to cut national Guard drill pay in half

Fix the broken medical evaluation board process

The Medical Evaluation Board process is broken resulting in a current four year backlog for Reserve Component personnel awaiting fitness determinations. Some personnel are separating from the military with the termination of enlistments and officer retirements without a fitness determination or the military disability finding that would otherwise follow the MEB evaluation process when appropriate. The bottleneck arises from the limited number of military physicians staffing the MEBs and the current policy that restricts MEBs to the often far removed Military Treatment Facilities creating severe access problems for injured Guard. Increasing MEB physician staffing from civilian, Veterans Administration and Reserve Components sectors and locating MEBs in the states and territories would alleviate the backlog. This would enhance readiness by increasing opportunities and catch points for physicians to clearly document in a timely manner a Soldier's medical condition and any duty limitations. Defense Health Programs has historically been turning in nearly a billion dollars annually in unobligated funds which could well be spent in this effort.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Authorize Off Site Medical Evaluation Boards with Adjudicatory Authority for Reserve Component Personnel; and require the Department of the Army to establish within each state and territory Medical Evaluation Boards (MEBs) staffed by a combination of civilian occupational medicine, Veterans Administration and Reserve Component physicians to adjudicate medical retention standards for National Guard and Reserve personnel, in accordance with Army regulations

Eliminate the Fiscal year Requirement for Deployed Service to Reduce the Eligibility Age for Members of the Reserve Components to Collect Retirement Pay

The Fiscal Year 2008 National Defense Authorization Act reduced the archaic 60 year eligibility age for retired members of the Ready Reserve to collect retirement pay three months for each aggregate of 90 days per fiscal year of active duty performed in Title 10 status in support of a contingency operation or in Title 32 status in responding to a national emergency. Unfortunately, the qualifying service must occur within a single fiscal year thereby not crediting otherwise qualifying service spread over two fiscal years. Historic provisions applied only to service after January 28, 2008, the date of enactment of the 2008 NDAA.

For example, if one served 90 days in OIF from September 1, 2008 through November 29, 2008, that service would not be credited in reducing the retirement eligibility age. However, if the person served 90 days in OIF from October 1, 2008 through December 29, 2008, that service would be fully credited. This distinction unfairly penalizes those who serve bravely with orders spanning two fiscal years.

Recommendation

The National Guard Association of the United States urges the Congress to:

- Eliminate the fiscal year requirement that requires the 90 days of qualifying cumulative service in a contingency operation needed to reduce the 60 year eligibility for Reserve Component members to collect retirement pay to be served in a single fiscal year.

APPENDIX

Excerpted from a 2008 e-mail from Dana Headapohl, M.D., to Colonel Peter J. Duffy
Colonel Duffy - I am sending links to articles about the importance of providing medical surveillance examinations for workers in jobs with specific hazardous exposures. I believe this approach could be modified to evaluate National Guard members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan for PTSD, TBIs and depression.

The OSHA medical surveillance model includes the following basic elements:

1. Identification of potential hazardous exposures (chemical, physical, biologic).

2. Screening workers for appropriateness of placement into a specific work environment with such exposures. For example, individuals with compromised liver functions should not be placed in environments with unprotected exposures to hepatotoxins.
3. Monitoring workers after unprotected exposure incidents. Examples- monitoring pulmonary function in a worker exposed to a chlorine gas spill, or following hepatitis and HIV markers in a nurse after a needle stick injury.
4. Conducting exit examinations at the end of an assignment with hazardous exposures, to ensure that workers have not suffered adverse health effects from those exposures (including concussive explosions or other traumatic events).
5. Surveillance exams of all types (OSHA mandated surveillance programs, population health screening for chronic disease risk factors) have been a part of my practice of Occupational and Preventive Medicine in Montana for the past 22 years. Early diagnosis and treatment is especially essential for potential medical problems facing military members serving in Iraq and Afghanistan - post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), traumatic brain injury (TBI) and depression. Timely diagnosis and aggressive treatment is essential especially for these problems, to maximize treatment success and functioning and to mitigate suffering.

There are a number of organizations that design and implement medical surveillance programs. There is no reason the same approach could not be applied to the specific exposures and potential medical problems facing National Guard troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. With proper program design and local provider training, this program would not need to be costly. In my clinical experience, male patients especially are more likely to report symptoms of PTSD, TBI, or depression in the context of an examination rather than questionnaire. Findings can present subtly, but if untreated can have devastating effects on the individual, family and work place.

In my practice, I have seen a number of Vietnam veterans, and more recently National Guard members who have returned from deployment in Iraq or Afghanistan, who have been inadequately screened and/or are suffering unnecessarily because of geographical barriers to adequate treatment. This is unacceptable treatment of group that has been asked to sacrifice for our country. They deserve better.

I applaud your organization's efforts to lobby for better post deployment screening and treatment of the National Guard members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

Dana Headapohl MD

<http://www.aafp.org/afp/20000501/2785.html>

This is about military surveillance exams:

https://www.desc.dla.mil/DCM/Files/QSRHealth%20Medical%20Exam_1.pdf

<http://www.lohp.org/graphics/pdf/hw24en06.pdf>

<http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/sbw/management/wald.html>
http://www.ushealthworks.com/Page.aspx?Name=Services_MedSur

Disclosure Statement

Neither NGAUS nor I have received in this current year or within the past two fiscal years any federal grant or contract.

Peter Duffy, Colonel US Army (Retired)
 Legislative Director
 NGAUS

Senator GILLIBRAND. I am going to talk about a couple of issues in my 7 minutes. I want to go through sexual assault, hazing, suicide. I have enormous respect for the men and women who serve in the military, and that is why I am absolutely committed to ending violent crime, sexual assault, and rape among those in uniform.

The new DOD health related behavior survey of the Active Duty military personnel was released this week, and I was disturbed by the findings that more than one in five women on Active Duty in the armed services reported experiencing unwarranted sexual contact by a fellow servicemember. The rate for men was 3.3 percent. Those rates are absolutely unacceptable, and the men and women who serve in our armed services are the military's most precious resource, as you said, Secretary Lamont. Clearly the system is failing to protect them from the worst kinds of violence.

As you may know, I am working on legislation that will remove the initial disposition authority from commanding officers and put them in the hands of experienced military prosecutors. Over the past few months, we have been examining this change, and one of the concerns that has been voiced is that it will disrupt the good order and discipline of the unit.

In your opinion, what precisely about this change would disrupt good order and discipline? What other recommendations do you have for dealing with this crisis and actually getting results? You may start, Secretary Lamont.

Mr. LAMONT. One thing that detracts from the dignity and respect of a soldier, and we have carefully considered it, we are very much aware of our most recent challenges in this regard.

While I have not seen your proposed legislation, I am aware of bits and pieces of it. I will leave for General Bromberg the concerns that you made reference to with regard to good order and discipline.

Senator GILLIBRAND. General Bromberg?

General BROMBERG. Yes, Senator. Certainly we are just as concerned as you are obviously, and it is just not good enough the progress we are making. We need to continue to make progress. Certainly we want to look at all options on how we can improve as we go forward.

I think the team approach we put into effect, we are in the third year of our campaign plan. This year, we are focusing on achieving cultural change, and I think cultural change is key to our success

as we move forward. We need to continue to push that at every level across the Services.

But the teaming approach we have added over—almost 829 full-time victim advocates and sexual assault response coordinators. They are all trained. They are all nationally certified. They have 80 hours of training. We have also added over 9,000 collateral duty part-time victim advocates and sexual assault coordinators. We have added 20 special prosecutors, 30 additional lab technicians, 10 additional headquarters, what is called special highly qualified experts, to help with this process to enable the commanders to more fully understand the program, and increased training of all our Criminal Investigations Command agents with another additional 80 hours of special investigating procedures.

We think this team approach that we have put together is an alternative to go forward, to include paralegals, victim liaisons from the local judge advocate office as well. So achieving cultural change, including the approach of training, as well as prosecution and putting this larger team together is an alternative we certainly are pushing forward on.

Senator GILLIBRAND. How much time do you think those changes will take to start getting the numbers down, because obviously the difference between the 2008 report and the 2011 report was in the wrong direction. Now, that might just be a difference in feeling comfortable reporting, so we do not know why the change increased the number. How long do you think you will see results, tangible results, see numbers coming down, see reporting going up?

General BROMBERG. I think it is always difficult to put a time on cultural change. But we have seen an increase in our own internal surveys that we are looking at right now and balancing those with other reports we are seeing to make sure we are looking at the right data.

We have seen an increase in the propensity to report. Our last survey showed a 28 percent propensity report. Our most recent survey shows a 42 percent propensity report for females. Now, I am not saying that is—

Senator GILLIBRAND. What is that report called?

General BROMBERG. It is an internal operational troop survey that we have done internal to the Army.

Senator GILLIBRAND. You said “propensity report?”

General BROMBERG. Propensity. The propensity of a female to report that she has been either harassed or assaulted. We have to go back and really dig in the numbers, so I caution on the numbers. We are not claiming that as a victory, but certainly it may be a leading indicator.

We want to continue to do that. We want to continue to watch those leading indicators. A slight increase for males as well.

Mr. LAMONT. I do want to point out, though, that the actual assaults reported did drop this year. Of course, nowhere where we want it to be, but I would like to believe it is an indication that some of these programs, and particularly with regard to the investigators and the special prosecutors will be having an effect.

Senator GILLIBRAND. How did the numbers drop? You mean between 2008 and 2011, or in your own internal numbers?

General BROMBERG. Our internal numbers. That is one of our challenges when we look at the surveys, Senator, we have to make sure we are all looking at the same data on the surveys. I have not seen the reports you are referring to in detail yet, so as we peel those numbers back, then we will be able to tell the differences, because the numbers could be totally different for the different surveys.

Senator GILLIBRAND. I would like you to furnish all your internal tracking so that we have the benefit of that.

Admiral Van Buskirk? Secretary Garcia? General Milstead?

Mr. GARCIA. If I could start, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Go ahead.

Mr. GARCIA. The Navy leadership shares your belief these numbers are unacceptable, and we appreciate the approach you have taken with your proposed legislation and sharing it with us and letting us offer input.

We concur that the court martial process as we know it has evolved since World War II. The introduction of specialized prosecutors, defense counsel, a robust appeals process, has changed. That is why we are working at the Secretary of Defense's direction to revisit and reform the convening authority process as it exists now.

But know that we are not waiting on that process, and we are not living with these numbers. As we had a chance to visit the other day, you know that we have hired additional full-time sexual assault response coordinators and advocates and instituted a fleet-wide training programs. Every sailor and marine in the Navy has received training this year. Bystander intervention, training is taking place at every fleet concentration center.

Special training for our Judge Advocate General and Naval Criminal Investigation Service agents ensure they are armed with the optimal prosecution and investigative tools available. You know about our expedited transfer policy. You know about the elevation of the sexual assault initial disposition authority. More than that, we are seeking to, as my Army colleagues referenced earlier, change the command culture where events like this could take place. We know, for example, there is an undeniable correlation all too often between incidents of assault and alcohol use, and that is why we are in the process of introducing across the Navy and across the Marine Corps, at every command, the use of alcohol detection devices, which is a new step that we have never taken before, to educate our personnel and our force about responsible use.

I am aware of the study you cited earlier. I echo the concerns voiced earlier that the numbers are challenging, and we are digging into that. Within those numbers, for example, an increase in unrestricted reports versus restricted reports is a trend we want to see. An increase in personnel being willing to report events on the lower end of the unwanted sexual contact spectrum is positive if they are experiencing an atmosphere where they feel more comfortable coming forward.

We have our teeth into this, and we are committed to this, Senator.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. My time has expired, the Air Force can submit your answer for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. GINSBERG. The challenge we face regarding sexual assault in the military is complex. Sexual assault damages unit cohesiveness and mission accomplishment at the unit level. Because of this impact, our commanders need to be at the forefront of the fight to reduce sexual assault in the military.

One example of how good order and discipline could be directly impacted by removing initial disposition authority from commanders is with respect to the ability to enforce discipline through nonjudicial punishment under Article 15 of the Uniform Code of Military Justice. If an airman commits an offense that is appropriately disposed of through nonjudicial punishment under Article 15, the commander cannot compel the member to accept an Article 15. In the Article 15 process, if an airman accepts the forum, his commander assumes the role of trier of fact as well as sentencing authority for the offense alleged. However, an airman has the right to demand trial by court-martial instead. The ability of commanders to swiftly deal with those charges would be impacted if the commander did not have the authority to initiate court martial for an airman who turned down an Article 15 and essentially could render void one of the key tools for commanders to enforce good order and discipline through nonjudicial punishment by Article 15.

When commanders consider the appropriate level of discipline before exercising their initial disposition authority, they are advised by a judge advocate. By teaming a commander and a judge advocate, we achieve the purposes of military law. The commander fulfills the obligation to preserve good order and discipline in the pursuit of combat capability; the Judge Advocate General fulfills the purpose of the independent provision of legal advice in the pursuit of justice.

We continue to enhance our sexual assault prevention and response program to eliminate sexual assault from the Air Force, improving specific initiatives in the realms of prevention, investigation, accountability, and assessment in line with the Secretary of Defense's strategic guidance.

Senator GILLIBRAND. But if we have a second round, that will be my first question. Thank you. Secretary Graham, I mean, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Mr. Secretary. [Laughter.]

Sorry, Senator Graham.

Senator GRAHAM. Does it pay more and you get a plane? I will take it. [Laughter.]

Senator GILLIBRAND. More than that.

Senator GRAHAM. The country has enough problems without making me secretary of anything. [Laughter.]

TRICARE, from the Army, Navy, and Air Force's perspective at the Secretary level in 30 seconds or a minute, tell me about the sustainability of TRICARE.

Mr. LAMONT. Our health care costs are rising out of sight, as you can imagine. We would support the Secretary of Defense's efforts to increase minimally our fees where necessary.

Senator GRAHAM. They really have not been adjusted since 1995, have they?

Mr. LAMONT. No. While we do have cost-of-living adjustments and our other benefits have gone up for our servicemembers, our TRICARE fees and costs to them have remained flat. I think we are really going to have to address that in the future.

Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, the numbers speak for themselves. Our medical health system as a whole has gone from a \$19 billion enterprise in 2006 to a \$49 billion.

Senator GRAHAM. Nineteen to \$49 billion?

Mr. GARCIA. That is right.

Senator GRAHAM. Wow.

Mr. GARCIA. Like you, we know how critical this benefit is to our personnel, but it has to be sustainable. We are willing and in support of the efforts to enact sensible and reasonable adjustments to do so.

Senator GRAHAM. Air Force.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, obviously, sustaining an All-Volunteer Force is the Department's most critical priority, and medical readiness, and the medical care we provide for our airmen, and all of our servicemembers, is obviously vital.

That said, of course, the trend in health care costs is certainly rising, and in the flat to declining budgetary environment, that means that there is additional pressure on other areas of our budget, including force structure, modernization, and readiness. So, if we do not address those larger issues and make sure we strike that right balance. The continual formula for the Air Force is continually shrinking to become a smaller force, a less ready force. So again, we have to make sure we take care of our people, but then do it in a sustainable fashion.

Senator GRAHAM. So the glide path for the budget is pretty much not growing very fast, but health care costs are. So eventually that is not good news for the budget, and we have to make it more sustainable.

From an Army perspective in about 1 minute, tell us what sequestration is doing on the personnel side, even though pay is exempt from sequestration. From a morale point of view and a readiness point of view, on the personnel side, including families and civilians, how is this playing out in the Army?

General BROMBERG. Yes, Senator, if I could, first of all, as I am sure you are aware, we have had to curtail training in about 80 percent of the force, focusing on Afghanistan forces, those next deployers, as well as those in Korea.

Additionally, we have curtailed for the first time six combat training center rotations at our national training center. I do not recall a time we have ever done that before. We have cut our flight training hours by 37,000 hours. That takes about 500 aviators out of the force. That will take us a couple of years to recover that, and aviation is one of our most used assets in Afghanistan.

Senator GRAHAM. If you do not fly a lot, it is dangerous, right?

General BROMBERG. Yes, sir, very much so. So that is going to be significant for us. We have had to cancel some courses this year, leader development courses. We have had to defer maintenance, both the depots and also down to the units. We have had to release over 3,000 temporary employees, and additionally, we had to reduce the Reserve component and medical readiness. We have had to cut that budget as well.

For the families as far as morale, those civilian cutbacks have then translated into reduced services on installations, so everything you can think about that services a family on a post, camp, or station is going to see less hours, less availability. That, of course, creates great angst in the force.

Senator GRAHAM. Okay. The Navy.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Senator, I would like to focus on—you asked specifically about the morale, and I think from the great part of our jobs and being in the personnel business, you mentioned, is

about the people. I get a chance to actually go visit all of our homeports and actually hold townhalls and all hands call our people.

I would say that the morale is good, yet what is cropping up more and more recently is uncertainty in terms of as they listen to the debates that are being carried among the Services and here in Washington, DC, they are watching very closely how they can be impacted in terms of the budget.

Senator GRAHAM. Are families beginning to feel it?

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes. Well, they are questioning are services going to be available. So we are reassuring them that, yes, the services are going to be there. The counseling services, our family and readiness services are going to be there. Our critical components of our 21st century sailor and marine are going to still be there.

However, while we are able to do the services, there is a mortgaging of the future because we may not be able to do repairs to the facilities that they are operating in and modernize at the same time. So we are foregoing some of our future perhaps enhancements at the bias towards providing the services on a day-to-day basis.

So a little bit of the uncertainty I think is creeping in there with what is next. You mentioned health care, is health care still going to be there for them? So it is important for us to go out, talk to them, hear their concerns, and address them straightforwardly to let them know what is going on.

Senator GRAHAM. Thank you.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. But overall, I think the morale still remains good, but there is some uncertainty there.

Senator GRAHAM. The Marines?

General MILSTEAD. Thank you, Senator. The U.S. Marine Corps, 61 percent of our budget goes to the military personnel account. Of that 61 percent, only approximately about 4 percent is discretionary. So a large chunk of our money goes for people. I will echo the uncertainty.

But we have been able to, with the authorities that we have had, the commandant has been able to shift monies around in 2013. We have been able to do that. But 2014 and out——

Senator GRAHAM. If we do this over 10 years, will it be devastating?

General MILSTEAD. Yes. I would say that the Marine Corps is going to have to make some hard decisions. You mentioned that the personnel account is protected. It is protected this year, but the President may not choose—that is a policy decision. He could unprotect it.

But regardless of whether it is protected or not next year, we cannot afford to have the other 39 percent or so go to our readiness, as the Admiral pointed out, in our O&M accounts. The Marine Corps will be forced to do some things, some draconian things, and they may have to do with industry.

Senator GRAHAM. And——

General JONES. Sir, many of our civilian employees are also military spouses. As we cut, as furlough would hit the civilian spouses, it will hit the joint income of the family. But you have to remem-

ber, morale is also part of the mission. We have very proud airmen, and we are very proud of what they do every day, and as we take down flying hours by 203,000 flying hours across the Air Force, as sustainment modernization and restoration accounts are hit significantly under sequestration, all of that begins to eat away at the comfort level of their ability to do the mission.

Our airmen and their families feel the uncertainty of what is going forward in the future because of sequestration as it impacts them personally as a family and professionally as a mission.

Senator GRAHAM. One final thought. It is one thing to be inconvenienced and not have the nicer stuff. People, I think, understand that they are sacrificing their lives in military. But one thing I think would destroy morale is to believe that your spouse is not well equipped and well trained.

VOICE. Senator, is your microphone on?

Senator GRAHAM. Yes, sorry. I said the one thing that will hurt family morale more than anything, they can live without conveniences. They are a tough lot. But if they believe that their loved ones are not well trained and well equipped, we are going to destroy the family.

Thank you.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you, Madam Chairman. I would like to pursue a line of questioning that Senator Gillibrand began. I am pleased to be working with her on some of these sexual assault initiatives, and thank her for her leadership.

To come back to the question that she raised, and I am not sure it was answered, General Bromberg, if prosecutorial decisions were removed from the commanding officer either for sexual assault or more broadly, would that pose an insuperable obstacle to the good order and discipline of the military?

General BROMBERG. Senator, it could. It could very well, and that is what we have to look at. We have to look at the authorities and responsibilities of the commander, not just in this area, but across the whole spectrum of what we ask commanders to do from the company level, at the captain level, all the way through the general office level, particularly in a deployed environment where you expect officers to maintain good order and discipline in combat operations as well as when people are in garrison. Of course, this problem spans both deployment situations as well as at the home station.

I think we have to look at the fundamental reasons why we want the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) and the authority with our commanders in the field. So I think there is a real potential. We have to discuss it, and we have to understand the full range of impacts of those kinds of—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. But you are willing to discuss it, because if there were certain kinds of crimes, and these are really predatory crimes, violence often, that kind of decision as to whether to commence a criminal prosecution in some instances might well be at least lodged in some independent authority.

General BROMBERG. I think right now today, Senator, with the special teams we have put together advising the commander, it

gives the commander that capability in the first place. So I would like to start to have that discussion.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Those special teams include a victim's advocate or a survivor's advocate?

General BROMBERG. They include the special prosecutors, the highly qualified experts, the additional training of the criminal investigation units—

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I know that the Air Force, and maybe I can ask you, General Jones, when I received a briefing from General Welsh, he described the victim's advocate program that the Air Force was implementing. I wonder if you could describe for us perhaps some of the most recent lessons learned, some of the experience, and your evaluation of it.

General JONES. Sir, I would be happy to. We started with 60 legal experts who we trained to be special victim's counsels to give the victims a voice in this process, because the process can be intimidating. The process can be daunting, and many victims will tell us that they are revictimized as they go through the system.

When we appointed 60 attorneys to specifically focus as special victim's counsels, the number of cases they took quickly ramped up to over 250 cases. I say "over 250" because literally every day we go back to look at the numbers. They are continuing to increase. It is empowering the victims to feel that they can go through with the process.

In speaking with national experts that everyone recognizes, individuals such as Anne Munch and David Lisak, are real experts in this area. They will tell us that one of the benchmarks that you should look at is how many people did not follow through with the allegations once they were sexually assaulted, that did not see things through to the end.

You can argue that the number of people who report sexual assaults may go up if you have a good program and people feel comfortable reporting. There is evidence that if people do not feel like there is trust in the system, the numbers will go down. So the experts will tell us the number of people who will not follow through is something we should look at.

The fact that we have instituted this special victims counsel within the Air Force, the fact that our chief of staff called in every operational level commander, every wing commander, to specifically look them in the eye and tell them that we are going to get after sexual assault in the Air Force. We had 790 sexual assaults in the Air Force last year. One is too many. We have to be able to go make sure that the individuals are protected, that the individuals, when they come forward with a crime, that we investigate the crime, we punish the perpetrators.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We have at this point, and I apologize for interrupting you.

General JONES. No, that is okay.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. We are all limited in terms of the amount of time we have. Do you have benchmarks or metrics that—and I know they may be very difficult to establish, show the success of this program, although it has been operating for a relatively short period of time.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, this program just started in January, but it is something we are looking at very carefully. We get reports frequently from our Judge Advocate General, Lieutenant General Harding. We are going to do some interim reports and then a more final report as this goes on, but the initial results, as General Jones says, is that this is making the victims very comfortable with the legal and investigative process.

They have already gone through what can be a life altering experience, and then they are going to go through this very fatiguing investigatory and prosecutorial process. Now to have somebody to help interpret this process, help be there with them, along with the full-time victim advocates that we are bringing on, and the sexual assault response coordinators. You have this whole sort of interdisciplinary team that is there to back up victims as they go through.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Have the other Services expressed interest or inquired about this program?

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, we are certainly very open with the other Services about our program and how we are doing it, but I certainly do not want to characterize where they are.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I want to express my appreciation for the good work that you are doing in this area, and suggest that perhaps the other Services might, as you generally do, learn from the experience of your colleagues in your brother and sister Services.

If I may ask, General Milstead, I know that there has been a plus up of the Marine Corps cyber command, Marine security guards, and special operations. As the Marine Corps draws down, are you concerned that the increase in personnel in these various commands could detract from or hollow out the strength of the other units?

General MILSTEAD. Senator, as we have incrementally downsized the Marine Corps, we have done it through a structure review. We have gone at this through a deliberate process of analysis.

We are currently on target for a 1,821 force, and that 1,821 force sufficiently fills the needs to keep the Marine security guard. The extra 1,000 marines that has come out of late is additive to that. The Commandant has made it very clear that the cost of those personnel and the cost for their training, the O&M for those personnel and for those billets must be above and beyond what is in our budget piece.

As far as the cyber community, that has an increased appetite, and we have been feeding it, and we will continue to do so in an analytical way. That has been a part of the process. So as we downsize, you will not see a corresponding decrease in those two forces. They are manned for a specific mission, and they will be kept at that.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. My time has expired, but I want to thank every one of you for your extraordinary service to our Nation in a difficult time. I very much appreciate your being here today and your very excellent testimony. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you, Senator.

Senator Ayotte.

Senator AYOTTE. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

I would ask, first of all, Secretary Garcia and Admiral Van Buskirk, about the civilian furlough impact in the Navy. I am very proud of the work done at the Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, having visited there recently, and talked to them about the civilian furlough impact on the maintenance schedule for our fleet.

Obviously, I think this is a situation that ends up being penny-wise, pound foolish because we will get behind on the maintenance schedule, and will not be able to have our fleet ready obviously. Then it costs more in the end as we are looking forward to the maintenance costs here for our submarine fleet. I just wanted to say I think it is critical that the hiring freeze be lifted or waivers approved, particularly for critical areas, like maintenance of our submarine program.

Recently it has been brought to my attention that the Navy has developed a plan that could allow the Navy as well as the Marine Corps, General Milstead, to use its funds within existing appropriations to avoid the civilian furloughs all together. Do you anticipate the Office of the Secretary of Defense will permit the Navy to move forward with this plan?

Mr. GARCIA. Senator, I appreciate the question, and I know you are aware that from the beginning of this process, the Navy's position has been that furlough is the last resort. We have developed daily plans to minimize—the number, as we speak, is 14 days—to bring that number as far down as possible. But there are tradeoffs, and this is a deliberative process across DOD. We are working with them every day, including as recently as a session with the comptroller and our Secretary of the Navy yesterday.

In the meantime, we have no alternative but to—our jobs are to manage our workforce such that if the furloughs do go forward, the impact on readiness, on long-term maintenance, is as minimal as possible, spreading those out where we can, trying to drive that number as far down as possible. Scott?

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. I would just like to add that I think you hit it on the mark. Our biggest concern lies in the maintenance areas because that is directly associated with our ability to maintain a fleet ready and ready to deploy.

Senator AYOTTE. Yes. You get behind on those issues.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes, ma'am. Of course, we are very concerned about that. We are also concerned about it from the total force aspect. One of my contemporaries also mentioned here about the impact on morale. As this goes forward, it is one that we are concerned with because this hits just one specific area of our workforce. But still the burden of the work is going to be there and have to be picked up by the remaining civilians who are there, and uniformed service, and Active and Reserves. So we are watching it very carefully. Certainly as low as we can get in terms of the furlough days is the better for us to be able to manage.

From a personnel perspective, I represent as well training and education uniquely as chief of naval personnel. So we are just as concerned there in terms of the furlough days because we have many civilians who work in the training environment that are the instructors that work in our school houses. Therefore, we are concerned about potential impacts to the throughput of our sailors who

then have to go—will be manning the ships to fulfill—to backfill those who are leaving. So it concerns us in that area as well.

Senator AYOTTE. I appreciate that it certainly concerns all of you. My concern is that we know that certainly the Navy can avoid the civilian furloughs, has a way forward to do it. It is up to OSD right now.

I understand what they are saying about looking total force, but we have a situation where we are going to pay for this in the end. I hope OSD actually goes forward with the plan that the Navy has put forward. I will leave it with that.

I wanted to ask about the Army Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES). Secretary Lamont, in your prepared testimony, you said that fiscal year 2012 was the first full year in which the Army used the IDES Army wide, and that it has eliminated many of the sequential and duplicative processes found in the respective Legacy systems.

Thank you for you doing that. I appreciate it. I applaud your efforts. But currently, what is the average time for a soldier to process through IDES?

Mr. LAMONT. We still exceed over 400 days in that.

Senator AYOTTE. Obviously, I think we can all agree that is totally unacceptable.

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, we do agree.

Senator AYOTTE. I know that in your prepared remarks, you said that soldiers starting IDES today will complete the process in less than 295 days. Is that true?

Mr. LAMONT. That is certainly our goal, and we expect to be there by the end of this fiscal year.

Senator AYOTTE. Let me ask you this. Please, do not tell me you think that 295 days is acceptable either.

General BROMBERG. Two hundred and ninety-five is the duty goal, Senator, but what is most important is the care they get. Whatever we do, whether it is a complex case to a simple case, some will get through in 180 days, but they get the appropriate care with the appropriate compensation with appropriate benefits in the amount of time that we desire. That is our primary goal first.

Senator AYOTTE. But you are not setting the ultimate goal at 295 days, are you?

General BROMBERG. That is the DOD goal right now, and that is probably pretty reasonable for what the process—

Senator AYOTTE. That is where we are going to keep the goal.

General BROMBERG. Ma'am, it may change in the future, but we need to meet that goal first.

Senator AYOTTE. No, I want you to meet it, but do not tell me that that is where we are going to stop because I just do not think that is acceptable.

General BROMBERG. We will not stop there, but we will never shortchange the medical care that these folks need to get.

Senator AYOTTE. I think we are certainly all in agreement on that.

General BROMBERG. It does take a while for complex cases.

Senator AYOTTE. I have to say, certainly thank God you are all in a better—having been in a hearing the other day with Secretary

Shinseki before the VA, I mean, at least it is better than what is happening in many of those cases there. But we still have a significant coordination issue obviously with the VA that needs to be addressed. It is really important because we just hear from too many people that are waiting too long.

Mr. LAMONT. Well, we have been very fortunate, frankly, because Congress did give us the ability to increase the resources necessary for our health care workers and the people who are involved in this process. Through the years, we have now standardized our process. We understand where we are going, and our throughput is much, much better than it was before. In fact, we may have contributed, because of that unexpected success, to the VA's problem in that we have created a backlog for them that may not have been able to compensate for without those additional resources.

Senator AYOTTE. Well, at least you got a system online. They are finally getting their system online. I mean, it is taking too long for these things. I know you had a comment, Secretary Ginsberg.

Mr. GINSBERG. Just to add to the discussion of the DOD standard. This is something, of course, of prime interest to our Secretary of Defense and Deputy Secretary. Periodically they will get the Service Secretaries, Assistant Secretaries, and those responsible for personnel, to look up and down the various stages of the IDES and say, is this reasonable? What can we do to improve it? Is this really a good metric that is in place. So a critical concern is to make sure that we are moving everybody through the process, and that the standards that are being set are reasonable.

Senator AYOTTE. I thank you all very much for being here today and for your service. This is a very important issue that I look forward to continuing to work with you on, so that we can obviously get our servicemembers evaluated as quickly as possible. I know that you are focused on making sure they get the care that they need in the interim. But we all share the same goal.

I appreciate you leading in difficult times with sequestration, and I thank you for what you are doing.

Senator GILLIBRAND. We have time for another round, so if you would like to stay, you can have another 7 minutes.

I would like to ask a little bit more about cyber. I appreciated Senator Blumenthal's focus on that. The fiscal year 2014 budget indicates a large investment in our military cyber capabilities. The Pentagon approved a major expansion of the U.S. Cyber Command, increased ranks from 900 to 4,900 personnel, or create the cyber warriors. I understand you are going to fortify DOD's own networks, help guide executive offense attacks, protect critical infrastructure like power grids and power plants.

Senator Vitter and I have a bill called the Cyber Warrior Act, which provides the National Guard to serve a robust role in providing cyber experts to the Department. I understand that General Alexander is seeking thousands more cyber personnel, and that the Services do not have the adequate experts among your active duty.

What is each of your Services doing to recruit and retrain individuals with the skills needed for military cyber requirements? Do you need additional legislative authority to track these individuals to military Service? Is there a better way to make use of our Na-

tional Guard and Reserve to make use of cyber skills resident in our society? Why do we not start with the Air Force?

General JONES. Ma'am, we are looking at how we have been doing cyber for a while in the Air Force, but we are looking at how we take that next step, how we retain and recruit these very specialized individuals. Many of them today are military. We can use recruiting bonuses. We can use continuation bonuses. But under sequestration, all bonuses will be getting severe scrutiny as we look to reduce the budget.

Right now we do not know of any special legislative authorities we would need at this point, although we are still evaluating that. But we just have to make sure we are not being caught up in the old way of thinking as we look down at what clearly is going to be a new form of warfare.

Mr. GINSBERG. Ma'am, if I could just dovetail on General Jones' remarks and talk specifically about the role of the Air Reserve component, Guard and Reserve. As we go forward and figure out what are the requirements to staff up to this new cyber command, we are going to make sure that we are looking at the portion of that mission that the Guard and Reserve can contribute to very carefully. This is certainly relevant. The Guard and Reserve could bring some very key contributions.

You need a continuity of expertise in this mission area. We do not move people in the Guard and Reserve at the same level, so you need somebody who understands the details, understands the change in technology. That could very well be a mission that the Guard and Reserve take on more. We have a process in the Air Force to really look at what the Air Force mission requirements are over the long term, and then think mission area by mission area, what is the best balance among the various components.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Senator, I think nothing like that—as I look across this table, all of us who are sitting at this table, we are collectively working with OSD on this very issue, sharing our best practices, our lessons learned as we are trying to all, I think, work jointly towards attacking this issue, and collectively working towards what should be the incentives that we apply. What should be the makeup of the people that make up our cyber warriors, the seniority, the ratings, the ranks, the MOSs? I think you should be encouraged by how well I think the Services are working towards providing this critical capability for our national defense.

Additionally, we are looking at all those things to see if there are legislative things that we do need, and that is what we all have been working on to make sure we do this together jointly so there is no fratricide between us as we go forward, or with the other agencies. Clearly, there are a lot of skill sets that are demanded from our people which would be in demand for other agencies to use. So to make sure we are working with the other agencies that are involved in the cyber area, that we attack it jointly and look towards how we build the workforce, how we sustain it.

So I think, again, you should be encouraged by how well I think we are working towards this to solve those issues, look to see where there are seams.

General BROMBERG. Senator, yes. Very similar to my colleagues here, looking at everything in detail. But there is definitely a place

for the Reserve component, particularly when we look at the particular skillsets we need.

We are going to start by using our existing forces obviously and build from those capabilities. We have already started screening. It does not matter what you are doing today, but do you have the right skills and attributes that we would look for in cyber warfare?

We also believe there might be the need for legislation if we want to look at something along direct commissioning, going out into the civilian market and trying to pull people in. But of course with that will come dollars, and I think we will have to talk in the future about what kind of incentives because I think to maintain this talent and not have it transferred to the civilian sector back and forth, we will have to talk about compensation at some point. A very unique skill set. From my time at the U.S. Strategic Command, a couple of years ago I saw the same thing happen as we started this off. So we would be very sensitive to that, and we will bring those proposals forward jointly, I believe.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. That sounds wonderful. I really want to work with you on this and to develop the plan, and whatever support you need we want to make sure we get it for you because it is such an urgent issue.

Since I have a minute and a half left, I want to return back to hazing and suicides. Obviously the suicide rate is horrible. Suicide is not a military specific tragedy, but I would like to know what you are doing specifically to prevent suicides.

I have heard that for a lot of the servicemembers, there is still a stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and there is a fear that it could end a member's career. So what is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward? The increase in suicide among people who have never been deployed is especially troubling, so what are we doing for that particular group?

Now, with regard to hazing specifically, two of the recent suicides were New Yorkers, Private Danny Chen and Private Hamson McPherson. They were both minorities serving in the military, and it has been suggested that the lack of diversity in the military played some role in the hazing that led to their suicides.

It is my understanding that hazing is not an enumerated offense in the UCMJ, leaving convening authorities with limited options for charging the perpetrators. Do you believe with that specifically we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense? Just more broadly, what is your status reporting on hazing? What policy changes do you propose? Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different? What are your Services doing to increase diversity? Whoever wants to take it first.

General BROMBERG. Just in time, ma'am, very quickly, we have already changed our regulations as far as hazing. We have also modified the UCMJ to include where that is chargeable, and that is with hazing. We will follow up with the details on that.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Okay.

General BROMBERG. Because it is a much more longer answer.

As far as the stigma on suicide—Ready and Resilience Campaign in the Army. Again, we will take this for a follow-up. We will give

you a full detail. That is now we are approaching it, building resiliency in individuals and engaging leadership.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you. Any other—

Mr. GARCIA. If I could start with the suicide challenge. If time permits, Admiral Van Buskirk and General Milstead can take you through the specifics of the programs. You will hear things about the DSTRESS Line. You will hear about the effort to end the stigma of raising their hand. The fact that every marine or sailor who have spent 30 days or greater with boots on the ground will receive a mental health assessment without having to raise their hand. Everyone gets it.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Great.

Mr. GARCIA. We will do it again 120 days later. You will hear about the mobile training teams that are out in theater affirmatively seeking out our individual augmentees and assessing their mental health. They can get into those details.

But if I was to give an overarching departmental wide perspective on this challenge, it is this: perhaps the most vexing piece of this is that, as I suspect you are aware, 50 percent of our suicides—our worst tragedy—are nondeployers. Of those, 80 percent have never gone outside the proverbial wire. When we drill down on these tragedies, and we drill down on every one, what we find are all too often, as you alluded to earlier, non-military components that came together to cause this individual to take the most tragic action.

Personal finance, relationship issues, professional challenges, stress, and that is why we have enacted a series of programs from enhanced financial management for our junior enlisted personnel and their families to address each one of those. If time permits, I know the flag officer—

Senator GILLIBRAND. You can submit a full answer for the record.

[The information referred to follows:]

Mr. GINSBERG and Lieutenant General JONES. We do not believe the Uniform Code of Military Justice (UCMJ) should be amended to include an enumerated offense for hazing. Under its current construct, our military justice system has multiple tools that can be used to respond to incidents of hazing.

Violating the Department of Defense (DOD) anti-hazing regulations is an offense under Article 92 of the UCMJ and subjects an offender to the possibility of a dishonorable discharge and confinement for up to 2 years. In addition, the offender could still be accountable for any underlying offenses committed during the hazing (most commonly assault under Article 128, UCMJ). There is no shortage of enumerated offenses under the current UCMJ with which to charge misconduct otherwise characterized as hazing.

Although section 534(b)(3) of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2013 requires each of the Service Secretaries to report the methods currently implemented to track and report incidents of hazing, and Section 534(b)(4)(E) requires an assessment of the feasibility of establishing a database to track incidents of hazing, no requirement currently exists for any of the Services to formally report hazing.

Data on hazing in the Air Force, however, is indirectly collected through use of our Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps' Automated Military Justice Analysis and Management System (AMJAMS) database. AMJAMS is an offender-centric database used by the Air Force legal community to track the administration of justice for airmen suspected of any UCMJ violation that could result in referral of court-martial charges or nonjudicial punishment. Offenses are tracked in AMJAMS according to the specific UCMJ article or articles suspected to have been violated in a particular case. Since there is no specifically enumerated offense under the UCMJ for hazing,

a query of hazing offenses in the Air Force is accomplished by searching the narrative fields of the database files for key words.

In the past 5 years, the Air Force has had six reports of hazing, with five of those reports substantiated. We have no evidence that there is any link between diversity in the Air Force workplace and our five substantiated reports of hazing. While there are many benefits to increasing diversity in the workplace, it is not clear to us that it will have any impact on incidents of hazing.

We are working hard to identify specific areas of interest in under recruited geographic labor markets to enable us to attract and recruit the highest quality, diverse individuals to serve in our Air Force. In FY12, our Global Diversity Division partnered with the Air Force Recruiting Service to conduct a targeted advertising campaign in direct mail, digital media and print aimed at attracting high performing African American and Hispanic students who might qualify for U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) or Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) programs. In fact, the recruiting service devoted 20 percent of its fiscal year 2012 marketing budget to initiatives targeting specific minority communities (African American and Hispanic) to find high performing applicants and counter cultural biases against military service.

In addition to the recruiting service's efforts, the USAFA's numerous recruitment efforts and programs, such as its Summer Seminar Program, Diversity Visitation Program and Admissions Forum Initiative have been successful in many areas and serve as the foundation for the future. The Summer Seminar Program targets high performing, diverse students who would be USAFA direct entry, USAFA Prep-School or Falcon Foundation candidates. The Diversity Visitation Program brings prospective minority cadets to the Academy for a 4 day program which includes academics, interaction with senior leaders, tours of the Prep-School and airfield and attendance at a sporting event. The USAFA Admissions Forum Initiative conducts 6–10 admissions events per year in strategically selected locations with underrepresentation of target populations and includes presentations to area high school students and their parents/guardians, training sessions with area Admissions Liaison Officers (ALO), informational presentations to local educators/counselors, and informational/training sessions with local congressional staffers.

In its fourth year as a renewed program for recruiting, AFROTC's Gold Bar Recruiting Program will utilize 20 newly commissioned second lieutenant Gold Bar Recruiters (GBR) during the 2012-2013 school year. GBR's continue to refine their enterprise to find and influence high school minority candidates who have exceeded minimum High School Scholarship Program (HSSP) selection averages. The diverse backgrounds of GBRs allow them to connect with and recruit highly valued diverse applicants, some having similar experiences. The young, diverse faces of AFROTC recruiting, GBRs attend local, regional and national recruiting events.

In fiscal year 2013/2014, continued coordination between all Air Force stakeholders regarding the recruitment of future diverse military and civilian candidates will be crucial to our success. Organizations across the Air Force enterprise will continue to leverage integration of their accession efforts with the goal of gaining economies of scale and scope while maximizing the strategic effectiveness and impact of the Air Force message to key target audiences.

Vice Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Chairman Gillibrand, your question included multiple parts. I will respond to each one, individually:

Question:

What you are doing specifically to prevent suicides?

Answer:

Navy's Suicide Prevention Program employs five Lines of Effort, guided by an official fleet-wide policy instruction. The first two lines of effort—Education & Awareness and Prevention & Intervention, prepare leaders and sailors with the tools to navigate life's challenges and recognize the factors and warning signs that lead to suicide. Operational stress control and suicide prevention awareness and skills training are institutionalized at all accession points and career milestones. Additionally, in 2011, the Chief of Naval Operations established mobile training teams to deliver detailed professionally-facilitated fleet skills training, on-demand worldwide, for both deck-plate and senior leaders.

Because risk factors and warning signs may be more obvious to qualified professionals, we've developed collaborative partnerships with care providers; medical, chaplains, and other Navy-affiliated counselors, to leverage their unique expertise in recognizing risks in care and treatment settings to actualize our third line of ef-

fort—Sailor Care & Transformational Growth. These experts are key in the re-integration process as well, returning ready sailors to their commands. We've also developed and instituted training for legal officers, designed to enable them to proficiently recognize at-risk sailors in legal trouble, and focused staff training for transient personnel units where sailors are temporarily billeted while they prepare for separation from naval service.

Navy suicide prevention policy mandates that every command appoint a suicide prevention coordinator, who receives formal training and is responsible for local suicide prevention activities, annual command general military training, crisis response preparedness and reporting requirements. Suicide prevention coordinators contribute to building a supportive command climate and assisting leaders with maintaining an environment that promotes our fourth line of effort, Physical, Mental and Spiritual Fitness. Program-branded strategic communications products provide suicide prevention coordinators, leaders, and sailors with information on tools and education available to help them preserve their personal readiness, navigate stress and seek help before stressors compound. Additional "postvention" outreach is conducted for commands that have experienced a suicide to help them return to a mission-ready state.

The fifth line of effort, Assessment, informs program managers and Navy leaders through suicide data collection and analysis, and fleet feedback using annual Behavioral Health Quick Polls and the Command Stress Assessment, which is part of the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey required to be completed annually by every Navy unit.

Question:

What is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward?

Answer:

Encouraging help-seeking behavior is a critical component of our program's mission. Navy addresses policy barriers that lead to hiding stress injuries, suicidal behaviors and emotional stress, to ensure that commands understand leadership's commitment to upholding seeking help as a sign of strength. All of our training, informational products, leadership messages and multi-media resources encourage sailors to "ACT: Ask, Care, Treat." The 2012 Behavioral Health Quick Poll revealed that over 87 percent of sailors were able to correctly identify the ACT acronym, and many believed that shipmates would be supportive if a sailor sought help from the Navy for suicidal thoughts or actions. Committed to minimizing the negative perceptions and misconceptions regarding seeking help, Navy introduced the message "It's Okay to Speak up When You're Down" in 2012. This message was presented to the fleet through a highly successful Public Service Announcement (PSA) contest that offered first-hand depiction of sailor perceptions. Several high quality PSAs are now being used for command-level training and awareness. We have also developed resources to promote healthy discussion of stress and suicide, as well as those that address myths about the perceived negative effect of reporting psychological health issues on security clearance form SF86. Additionally, this year, Navy has initiated a high degree of collaboration with the Chaplain Corps to reinforce their confidentiality campaign and promote awareness of Navy chaplains' 100 percent confidentiality policy. We continue to find new and creative ways to encourage those who have successfully sought treatment for emotional or psychological issues to come forward and be an example for shipmates, normalizing and rewarding help-seeking actions.

Question:

So, what are we doing among people who have never been deployed?

Answer:

The current Navy operating environment and operational tempo do not appear to directly increase the risk of suicide, likely due to high unit cohesion and camaraderie during deployment, in conjunction with an elevated sense of belonging and purpose. These are protective factors against suicide. Therefore, our Operational Stress Control and Suicide Prevention training and awareness efforts focus heavily on recognizing the same stressors faced by both civilians and sailors, deployers or non-deployers, e.g., relationship difficulties, financial troubles, career decline, substance abuse, and psychological health, in conjunction with service-related factors such as transition periods. From the time sailors enter the Navy—having never experienced a deployment—throughout the duration of their careers, operational stress control courses are the cornerstone of our fleet stress management training, providing an integrated structure of health promotion and resilience-building designed to improve stress coping skills and ultimately to prevent suicide. Initial pro-

gram awareness training is delivered at Recruit Training Command, and is then mandated annually through General Military Training at every Navy command. Additionally, tailored senior leadership training is delivered at the Senior Enlisted Academy and Command Leadership School, to help leaders recognize the signs of distress in all sailors and all operating environments.

Question:

Do you believe we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense?

Answer:

There is no need for a new article of the UCMJ to specifically create an enumerated offense of hazing. The conduct which constitutes hazing is already sufficiently punishable under existing articles. Although hazing is not a stand-alone offense under the UCMJ, the UCMJ does allow for its effective prosecution. It is punishable under Article 92, UCMJ, for Violation of a Lawful General Order. The maximum punishment for hazing as an orders violation is dishonorable discharge, 2 years of confinement, total forfeiture of pay and allowances, and reduction to pay grade E-1.

Under Navy instruction, hazing is defined as any conduct whereby a military member or members, regardless of service or rank, without proper authority causes another military member or members, regardless of service or rank, to suffer or be exposed to any activity which is cruel, abusive, humiliating, oppressive, demeaning, or harmful. No one can consent to hazing under the instruction.

In addition to Article 92, servicemembers alleged to have committed hazing can also be charged with additional offenses under the following articles:

- Article 93, Cruelty and Maltreatment. This article may apply when the accused is in a position of authority over another person (such that the accused can issue orders to that person), and the accused is cruel toward, or oppresses, or maltreats that person. Maximum punishment: dishonorable discharge, 1 year confinement, total forfeitures of pay and allowances, and reduction to pay grade E-1.
- Article 128, Assault. Depending on the circumstances and method of assault, the crime may be prosecuted as simple assault; assault consummated by a battery, or aggravated assault. Maximum punishment for the type of aggravated assault that may be the result of hazing: dishonorable discharge, 3 or 5 years confinement (depending on the facts), total forfeitures of pay and allowances, and reduction to paygrade E-1.

Hazing-related offenses can be prosecuted at general, special, or summary courts-martial or servicemembers can receive non-judicial punishment or administrative separation for conduct that constitutes hazing.

The Acting General Counsel of the Department of Defense recently tasked the Joint Service Committee on Military Justice (JSC) to evaluate the possibility of establishing a specific "hazing" offense within the UCMJ. The JSC concluded that the UCMJ currently provides sufficient authority to prosecute hazing offenses. The JSC did propose a change to the Manual for Courts-Martial: the inclusion of an Analysis section, which will provide specific guidance to trial prosecutors on charging hazing incidents as a violation of a lawful order, under Article 92. Another proposal being reviewed is a sentence enhancement for hazing. If adopted by the President, this enhancement would increase the authorized maximum punishment for an Article 92 violation, if that violation constituted hazing.

Question:

What is your status on reporting on hazing?

Answer:

The requirement to report an act of hazing is outlined in the Department of the Navy's hazing instruction and Navy's Special Incident Reporting Procedures. By Department of the Navy policy, any allegation of hazing must be reported to the commanding officer, who must report any substantiated incident to the Chief of Naval Operations.

Question:

What policy changes do you propose?

Answer:

We propose no changes to current hazing policy, which is clear and unambiguous.

Question:

Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different?

Answer:

There is currently no data that supports the premise that increased diversity will reduce instances of hazing. Every member of the Department of the Navy must be afforded the opportunity to be a productive and contributing member, free of hazing and its ill effects.

Question:

What are your Services doing to increase diversity?

Answer:

Navy is utilizing focused outreach and recruiting to maintain and expand diversity of accessions, and is utilizing internal programs to enhance retention and development of all sailors. The rescission of the combat exclusion rule opened equal professional opportunity for women and the implementation of proactive programs e.g., longer post-partum deployment waivers, changes to sea/shore rotations, the career intermission pilot program, are having a positive impact on retention of women. Navy has moved away from an episodic, to a sustained, model of outreach to under-represented groups. A Vice Chief of Naval Operations-led panel oversees the allocation of Navy outreach funds and strategy. Navy Recruiting Command utilizes Navy City Outreach Officers to directly contact diverse groups in their respective areas of responsibility. Individual Navy communities are accountable to the Chief of Naval Operations during their annual community self-assessment briefs for diminishing barriers to retention and advancement of diverse groups.

Lieutenant General MILSTEAD. Senator Gillibrand requested the following responses based on the hearing transcript page 56 thru page 59:

1. Obviously the suicide rate is horrible. Suicide is not a military specific tragedy, but I would like to know what you are doing specifically to prevent suicides? Preventing suicide requires vigilance and our concerted effort to harness the strength of engaged leaders.

Answer:

Suicide is a very complex problem and it takes a multilevel (unit, family, peer, individual, community, society), multifaceted (individual/peer suicide prevention, family training, responsible reporting of suicide, stigma reduction of receiving behavioral healthcare treatment, case management) public health approach to prevent suicide. The mission of the Marine Corps as it relates to suicide prevention is to consistently and aggressively identify sources of risk and develop a comprehensive and strategic approach to address them.

Identifying at risk: All marines are taught to recognize the warning signs of suicide, ask if a marine is thinking of suicide, express genuine care and concern for the marine, and immediately escort the marine to help. Marine Corps leaders are taught to know their marines on a personal and professional level and show genuine compassion and concern for all of the marines. Leaders are also taught that they serve as models to show marines that it takes a strong, committed marine to ask for and receive help.

Comprehensive and Coordinated Services: To efficiently manage behavioral health risk, protective factors, and ultimately prevent suicide, the Marine Corps has combined all related programs under one behavioral health branch, and is developing integrated training programs to address common risks and protective factors across all domains of behavioral health. The training supports universal awareness and selected and indicated training for certain high risk Marine populations. It will consolidate all behavioral health information, including our Never Leave A Marine Behind training, into a single training session that focuses on common risk and protective factors across the full spectrum of behavioral health issues.

Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) serves suicide prevention by providing marines the avenue to recognize, acknowledge and seek help for stress reactions, which can lead to suicide. OSCAR supports commanders in building unit strength, resilience and readiness, therefore, keeping marines in the fight. The OSCAR team training creates teams of marines, medical, religious personnel, and mental health professionals within each battalion, or equivalent unit, who work together to create a network of support. This model empowers marines with leader-

ship skills to break stigma and act as sensors for the commander by noticing small changes in behavior and taking action early.

The Marine Corps is implementing a Case Management System (CMS) that reaches across multiple programs. The system assists in the identification of at-risk marines and improves appropriate service delivery as well as aftercare efforts. The CMS better equips the Marine Corps to closely monitor marines at-risk for suicide to ensure they receive appropriate care.

The Marine Corps DSTRESS Line provides anonymous, 24/7 counseling services to any marine, attached sailor, or family member. The line is staffed by veteran marines and Fleet Marine Force corpsmen, Marine family members and civilian counselors specifically trained in Marine culture. The counseling gives callers 'one of their own' to speak with about their issues.

Additional ongoing and new prevention efforts are happening as well. This includes appointment and training Suicide Prevention Program Officers for each battalion and squadron to essentially serve as the "eyes and ears" of the suicide prevention program for the commanding officer.

2. I have heard that for a lot of the members of the troops, there is still a stigma associated with seeking mental health services, and there is a fear that it could end a member's career. So what is being done specifically to encourage servicemembers to come forward?

Answer:

It is important for marines to know that their leadership believes that they should seek help when faced with hard times and pain in their lives. Having engaged leaders that are alert to those at risk for suicide and take action to help them get help goes far to removing any notion of stigma. Additionally, it is essential to have leaders that show genuine care and concern for the marine, and who immediately escort the marine to help. It is also necessary for our leaders to serve as models to show marines that it takes a strong, committed person to ask for and receive help and by doing so lives up to the marine ethos. Through our various training programs, the Marine Corps is showing that our leaders are committed to standing behind our marines and their families when they need help spiritually, physically, psychologically and socially.

One particular program that helps remove stigma is OSCAR. OSCAR serves suicide prevention by providing marines the avenue to recognize, acknowledge and see help for stress reactions, which can lead to suicide. OSCAR supports commanders in building unit strength, resilience and readiness, keeping marines in the fight. The OSCAR team training creates teams of marines, medical, religious personnel, and mental health professionals within each battalion, or equivalent unit, who work together to create a network of support. This model empowers marines with leadership skills to break stigma and act as sensors for the commander by noticing small changes in behavior and taking action early.

3. The increase in suicide among people who have never been deployed is especially troubling, so what are we doing for that particular group?

Answer:

Regardless of the deployment history of a marine, the Marine Corps has programs that are available to decrease stress involving suicide risk factors, such as, relationship problems, legal or disciplinary problems, behavioral health diagnoses, financial problems and substance abuse. In addition, our Operational Stress Control and Readiness (OSCAR) program is currently being refreshed with a curriculum that is applicable to all duty assignments. Content is driven by questions rather than scenarios and key messages/topics are relevant regardless of deployment history. Pilots are underway for the updated OSCAR training with planned force-wide implementation in late summer 2013.

4. It is my understanding that hazing is not an enumerated offense in the UCMJ, leaving convening authorities with limited options for charging the perpetrators. Do you believe with that specifically we should change the UCMJ to make hazing a criminal offense?

Answer:

The Marine Corps recommends that no specific hazing offense should be created under the UCMJ or the MCM because it is unnecessary. Enumerating a specific hazing offense under the UCMJ or the MCM would be duplicative of existing articles under which hazing can be appropriately charged. Creating a new hazing offense will not improve accountability or adjudication of hazing. Under its current

construct, our military justice system has multiple tools that can be used to respond to incidents of hazing.

Violating the DOD anti-hazing regulations, in and of itself, subjects the offender to the possibility of a dishonorable discharge and confinement for up to 2 years. That charge, however, does not speak to the underlying offense. The offender could still be accountable for any additional offenses committed during the acts which constitute hazing. There are no shortage of enumerated offenses with which to charge misconduct that qualifies as hazing.

Hazing often has an assault component, and such misconduct will generally be charged separately. In many such cases, the assault is the gravamen of the offense. Since the prevention of hazing is tied to good order and discipline, Article 92 (violation of failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation) is an appropriate mechanism by which to enforce that standard. Moreover, statutory definitions are difficult to amend and update over time. When using Article 92 to prosecute hazing, DOD and the Service branches may update or amend the parameters of hazing much more effectively.

To the extent that Article 92 is the appropriate mechanism with which to charge those who violate the hazing policy, the Marine Corps recommends including guidance on pursuing charges against servicemembers suspected of hazing under Article 92, in a discussion section to be added under that Article, in Part IV of the MCM. The discussion would read as follows:

“Department or Service regulations may promulgate policies on hazing and prescribe punitive provisions. Where such punitive regulations exist, incidents of hazing may therefore be charged as violations of Article 92(1), violation of failure to obey a lawful general order or regulation. In addition to Article 92, practitioners in all armed services may consider additional charges under other punitive articles based upon the underlying conduct of hazing incidents.”

5. With regard to hazing specifically, two of the recent suicides were New Yorkers, Private Danny Chen and Private Hamsom McPherson. And they were both minorities serving in the military, and it has been suggested that the lack of diversity in the military played some role in the hazing that led to their suicides. What is your status reporting on hazing?

Answer:

Effective 20 May 2013, the Marine Corps’ policy for reporting allegations of hazing was revised and republished within Marine Corps Order (MCO) 1700.28B. Under this order, all allegations of hazing will be reported to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC). This reporting requirement is not subject to, or dependent upon, the results of investigation used for determining whether or not allegations are substantiated.

As a result of this revised reporting policy, HQMC will be more aware of the prevalence of hazing throughout its ranks and more effective in tracking hazing cases as they proceed through adjudication processes.

6. With regards to hazing, what policy changes do you propose?

Answer:

Effective 20 May 2013, the Marine Corps’ hazing policy was revised and republished as MCO 1700.28B. The most significant changes reflected in the Marine Corps’ new hazing policy include expanded reporting requirements, implementation of new tracking procedures, and refinements to the definition of hazing. With it promulgation all allegations of hazing will be reported to Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps (HQMC). This reporting requirement is not subject to, or dependent upon, the results of investigation used for determining whether or not allegations are substantiated.

In addition to the implementation of increased reporting requirements, MCO 1700.28B mandates the entry of all hazing allegations into the already existing Discrimination and Sexual Harassment (DASH) database. Once entered into the DASH database, all allegations will be tracked by HQMC from initial report to final disposition.

Finally, the definition of hazing has been refined to specifically describe actions or activities that may be considered hazing. Marines of all ranks participated in the revision process, which has resulted in a more refined definition that will provide increased clarity to junior marines.

In addition to providing a more comprehensive and presumably effective hazing policy, the Marine Corps has also taken the necessary actions to ensure that questions directly related to hazing are included on command climate surveys. The pur-

pose of this initiative is to proactively identify and address underlying issues within the command environment that may contribute to incidents of hazing.

7. Do you agree that increasing diversity will reduce instances of hazing based on individuals being different?

Answer:

Currently, we have not identified a linkage between hazing and race, ethnicity, or gender.

8. What are your Services doing to increase diversity?

Answer:

Four main points illustrate the Marine Corps' diversity strategy:

1. Identify, attract and retain the best.
2. Create a climate that allows marines to perform at their peak.
3. Assess and understand the eligible population and their influencers.
4. Remove institutional barriers that hinder opportunities

Executive Engagement on Diversity

The Commandant's Diversity Initiative includes four diversity task forces. These task forces have taken ownership of diversity challenges associated with ethnic minorities, leadership, women and service culture. Three-star executive sponsors are providing guidance and oversight of each task force. The task force concept represents a significant philosophical shift from ignoring human variations to uncovering and understanding them in order to drive actions. Through research and discussion of key questions, marines assigned to the task forces will play a key role in charting the way ahead for diversity in the Marine Corps. In order to ensure all officers and senior staff noncommissioned officers have an opportunity to be heard regarding diversity in the officer corps, all have been invited to participate in an online survey. The survey is a supporting arm of the task force effort in that it addresses: Culture and Leading Change; Leadership, Accountability, and Mentoring; Race/Ethnicity; and Women in the Corps. Analysis of the focus groups' themes and other resources may be used to direct future diversity actions and initiatives.

Marine Corps Leadership Seminar (MCLS)

The Marine Corps continues to present the Marine Corps Leadership Seminar to university students and community influencers at venues across the nation. In calendar year 2012, the Marine Corps conducted 6 MCLSs and reached 242 students and 334 influencers. During the spring of calendar year 2013, the MCLS held 5 seminars and 1 reception which provided the opportunity for Marine officers to interact with a diverse audience of over 275 students and 40 influencers. The MCLS schedule included seminars at Virginia Commonwealth University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, North Carolina State University, North Carolina Central University, and the Wake County Young Men's Leadership Academy, a magnet high school. The MCLS in conjunction with Marine Corps University is currently scheduled to visit the University of Washington's Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs in June 2013. In addition, leadership seminars are scheduled in Louisville, KY, in September and Atlanta, GA, in October. These seminars showcase Marine Corps leadership to diverse communities across the United States. The focus is on providing instruction and establishing dialogue with both student and faculty groups at colleges and universities. The intent is to offer participants an introductory understanding of the Marine Corps' unique brand of leadership. The MCLS accomplishes this by employing General Officers, active and retired, field-grade officers, company-grade officers and Staff Noncommissioned Officers to deliver personal leadership perspectives to each target audience.

Senator GILLIBRAND. It is something I want to work with you on. I also want to offer whatever resources you need. Any collaboration you need from the Senate on these issues I will provide because it is such an urgent issue.

Mr. GARCIA. Great.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thanks.

General JONES. Ma'am, one of the things we have done which is innovative is we have started embedding our mental health providers in the primary care facilities, not in the mental health clinic, but where you go for sick call, so that if you go in to see a doctor

and the doctor is questioning you about how things are going, and he feels like there is a mental health issue here, he does not need to take you down the hall to mental. He walks you across the hall to a provider within that little office of six or seven providers so no one knows that you are going to see someone, where you can be evaluated to see if there is a mental health issue.

We, like all the other Services, have found in the Air Force specifically there is no causal relationship between deployment, so we have to go after those things that do cause it. Relationships, financial problems, and legal problems are the top three things in the Air Force that cause it. The numbers will continue to be a challenge for us all, but we cannot take our eye off the ball.

We share your concern and your passion for this issue because it is just a tragedy we cannot afford to let happen in our Services.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you.

Senator Blumenthal?

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you. I would like to pursue a topic that a number of you raised in your written testimony, which is the transition assistance program (TAP), preparation for life after the military, which will be an increasingly important and prevalent challenge given the draw downs and the reduced numbers of active duty that are going to occur.

I assume that every one of the Services are at work on initiatives going forward, even beyond what you described in your testimony. So maybe I could ask each of the Services to expand on what you have given us in your testimony. We can just—in whatever order.

Mr. GINSBERG. Senator, this was a major priority of the President last year, and he launched into a veterans opportunity work, veterans employment initiative, that basically really directed the Services to look at our transition assistance up and down. That goes well beyond just redoing the TAP, which held a 3-day seminar. It was fundamentally enhancing it, adding new career tracks.

It also helps servicemembers be more career ready earlier on, to help start thinking about the transition and what they are going to do next even if they might be in the Service for 20 years. But as they go along, to always just be ready so that if for some reason through force management actions they find themselves in a transition, they will be prepared and be able to move out.

So we have applied manpower to this. We have applied resources. But it is an entirely redesigned program, again, presidentially directed that we will be rolling out in the months and years ahead.

[The information referred to follows:]

The Air Force is aggressively rolling out the redesigned Transition Assistance Program (TAP), and capturing monthly updates from installations Air Force-wide on the status of implementation. The Air Force was in compliance with the Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act by the 21 Nov 12 due date, with all active duty installations ready to provide the redesigned TAP.

The Air Force TAP assists our transitioning airmen to be competitive in the private sector during this period of challenging economic conditions. The overall goal of TAP is to provide separating or retiring servicemembers and their families the information, skills, and resources, as well as personal and financial wellness and life skills needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector. Prior to the re-design of TAP, the Air Force provided pre-separation counseling, workshops, and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) benefits briefings to separating airmen.

With the redesign of TAP, there were major changes and improvements to the program. An example includes the increased partnership between the Department of Labor (DOL), the Department of Education (DOE), the Small Business Administration (SBA) with the Department of Defense and the VA to provide new courses to transitioning servicemembers. Also, Transition Goals, Plans and Successes (GPS), a 5-day workshop, is now mandatory for all separating servicemembers as part of the new program. Part of Transition GPS is a new 3-day curriculum on gaining employment administered by the DOL. Also part of Transition GPS, the VA benefits briefing has been revised and is mandatory for everyone. Other changes surround the policy on attendance. Airmen who do not already have confirmed employment or acceptance to school, must participate in one of the following workshops: Technical Track (Run by VA), Entrepreneurial Track (Run by SBA), and the Education Track (Run by the DOE). In addition, a capstone event is added to provide a time for the service to verify the airman has completed all components of TAP, has met the Career Readiness Standards, and has received the resources and information he/she needs to be successful upon separation. Ultimately, TAP will no longer begin at the time a servicemember decides to separate from the Air Force. With the redesign, TAP will start from the time an airman enters the Air Force and continue throughout the Military Life Cycle. Lastly, additional resources have been added to support the new requirements, to include manpower and funding.

Feedback from airmen who are separating or retiring and have attended the new TAP program has been consistently positive, and have found the program useful. Our stern focus on providing our Air Force personnel who are separating and/or retiring with the information, skills, and resources needed for a successful transition to the civilian sector continues to grow. We are committed to exploring new means of sustaining innovative, timely and relevant support to our airmen that have defended this Nation.

General MILSTEAD. For the Marine Corps, our effort to rebuild our TAP precedes the Veterans' Opportunity to Work Act. The Commandant started that. That was one of the Commandant's planning guidance. It was to fix TAP. It was broken terribly. It had not received any attention in 15 years.

We are actually stepping out now with the new program. It has a common module where everybody goes through. There could be somebody that is, say, an officer or enlisted. They get the same common presentations that they need on VA, those sorts of things. Then we bust them off to use the analogy of whatever your window is. If you are going to college, you go down the college path. If you are going to get into an entrepreneurship, you are going to open up your own business, you go down that path. If you are going to do a vocation or do something like that, be a truck driver, then you go down that path. If you are going to college, then you go down that path because you do not want to sit there—I do not need what you need, and you do not need what I need, and it is a waste of time. We constrict it to 1 week because after a week, you lose them.

Then, we are putting it online, and we are having the reach back capability for those that do not listen, sit there, they text the whole time because, you know what? They are going to Costa Rica and surf for 6 months. Then when they come back and then they decide, oh, my gosh, what was it they said, they can come back online. They can reach back in. So this has the Commandant—it is one of his top, top topics.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Mr. GARCIA. The only thing I would add to that, Senator, is TAP, which we have known for the last decade and a half, is unrecognizable to this new regime. I will just caveat that the General's insights into the individual, specifically tailored tracks by saying there is a baseline that every transitioning member will get before

they go into those individuals chutes. They will be signed off on having received their full VA benefit package review, their full Department of Labor series of benefits and programs available to them there. Each of them will be advised on how their specific military specialty, their MOS, their Navy Enlisted Classification (NEC), translates into civilian industry in the private sector.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. Thank you.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. One thing I would like to add is, and I think General Milstead pointed to this, is that by virtue of going after this jointly, we are also stimulating some great innovation on how to deliver these products. You mentioned reach back and application, apps, so that the information is not just available to the person for a short period of time. It is available for a long period of time and can be updated and made more current, and, I think, more of interest to our members who are transitioning so they will pay attention, and they will have the resource for a longer period of time.

General BROMBERG. Senator, as my colleagues have said, totally different program, mandatory, 5 days. Great program.

As far as the Army, we have increased counselors to over 400. This year we have almost 700 counselors worldwide to help soldiers. We have 25 forward locations to help the Reserve component as they demobilize or as they leave Service and Reserves. We also have 76 locations for the Active component. Virtual capabilities have now been added. Virtual job fairs are becoming very popular.

In addition, the Army has wrapped this up in a Soldier for Life program where we are engaging industry in the communities. Many, many partnerships. I meet quarterly with 25 global companies to talk about removing barriers to veterans, and that has shown us a lot of product and a lot of great initiatives.

Lastly, a great initiative with the American Pipefitters. We have started a pilot up at Fort Lewis, WA, where they have actually taken soldiers while on duty time have trained, and they will become journeymen with a job guarantee when they complete the course. So great initiatives going forward.

Mr. LAMONT. Just to follow up on that, it is the credentialing that we are really trying to help with with some new programs. If you are a truck driver, for instance, in the Army, you may be very well qualified to receive a commercial driver's license in the State of Connecticut. Without having to go through additional training or pass a test, or what's the equivalent? We are trying to make sure that in many of these occupations, we can have a direct transfer, whether you are an electrician—what are your qualifications you would have to have in the various States.

We have any number of occupations similar to that, as you say, the pipefitter situation. In Illinois, for instance, the Heroes to Heart has a program with the teamsters, is very much focused on the over the road driver.

But those credentialing programs are going to be very, very important in moving them very quickly into the private sector.

Senator BLUMENTHAL. I would like to thank each of you for your information on this point. I think I do not need to tell you because you know it better than I, that this area is really so critically important, not only to our present service men and women, but also

to the veterans who are merging and have such contribution and skills to provide to our Nation. So thank you very much. I would like to follow up individually with you afterward.

My time has expired. Thank you, Madam Chairman.

Senator GILLIBRAND. Thank you to each of you for your extraordinary service, your very, extremely helpful testimony. We look forward to writing this year's authorization bill with your assistance. Thank you again for all you have done.

[Questions for the record with answers supplied follow:]

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR LINDSEY GRAHAM

CIVILIAN FURLOUNDS

1. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, I am concerned about the potential impact of civilian furloughs on the Services' critically important family support programs. If furloughs take place, do you expect any cutbacks in your operating hours at commissaries, exchanges, and child development centers or curtailment of morale, welfare, and recreation, Department of Defense Education Agency (DODEA) programs, Transition Assistance Program or military spouse employment programs?

Mr. LAMONT. As a result of funding reductions/furlough guidance, each commissary will close 1 day per week. Operations at 7-day stores will reduce to 6-day operations; 6 days to 5; and 5 days to 4. Stores will be closed 1 additional day a week unless adequate local nationals are available to remain open in overseas locations. HQ/Areas Operations will be closed to coincide with store closures. There will be no impact on operating hours at the Exchange.

As far as DODEA, furloughs will not affect the end of the 2012–2013 school year. Though furloughs will be in place at the start of the 2013–2014 school year, the number of days has not been confirmed. Regardless, DODEA will ensure that all students have a robust academic year. School staff will ensure students receive a full year of academic study even within a slightly shortened academic year due to the furloughs.

Transition counseling services are contracted by a fully-funded contract through 30 Sep 13. There will not be a decrease/delay in providing transition services to soldiers and their families. However, the program is overseen at most installations by Transition Services Managers (TSMs), who are civilian employees. Garrisons will have a civilian employee or military personnel available to oversee contract operations during the time the TSM is furloughed. At smaller installations, transitioning soldiers will utilize virtual counseling services to meet Veterans Opportunity to Work Act requirements.

Family and Morale, Welfare, and Recreation (FMWR) programs and services are currently frozen at fiscal year 2012 levels. Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employees are currently exempt from furlough, which includes 2,637 full-time Child Development Center (CDC) and School Age Center (SAC) employees. These individuals will continue to maintain 5-day coverage of centers to accommodate the needs of soldiers and families.

Although NAF employees are the primary service providers for most FMWR programs and services, appropriated fund (APF) employees are utilized within Army Community Service (ACS) Centers and, in some cases, Community Recreation programs. These employees are subject to furlough and some services will be impacted. Installation Senior Commanders and Garrison Commanders will determine the optimum method of furlough implementation with the goal of minimizing disruption to critical soldier and family programs. Some of these key programs include spouse employment, victim advocacy for sexual assault and domestic violence, Army emergency relief, support to exceptional family members, child abuse prevention and intervention support, support to wounded warriors and their families, and support to survivors. In most cases, our ACS Centers plan to close one day per week during the furlough period. In order to mitigate the effect of furlough, ACS Centers will develop strategies to ensure 24/7/365 coverage for key services such as victim advocacy and child abuse/domestic violence response. We encourage our centers to rely on electronic resources such as Army OneSource and Military OneSource to provide information and link up service providers to our soldiers and families.

Mr. GARCIA. The Defense Commissary Agency has advised that the furlough may result in the closure of each commissary one day a week.

Nonappropriated Fund (NAF) employees are exempt from furloughs and there is no anticipated impact to Navy Exchange or Marine Corps Exchange operations.

There is no anticipated impact to operating hours for child development centers as child care providers are exempt from the furlough.

The Navy does not expect any significant disruptions to family programs. Navy Family Support Programs and Services will establish staggered staffing hours and utilize furlough-exempt personnel to minimize the service delivery impact. This will accommodate furlough days for GS staff and allow us to maintain uninterrupted support for family services such as, family readiness centers, Sexual Assault Prevention and Response (SAPR) programs, spouse employment services, clinical counseling services, and financial counseling services.

Navy Morale, Welfare and Recreation activities, while implementing reduced hours of operation in all programs, including libraries, swimming pools and fitness centers, will minimize disruption by adjusting hours to peak usage periods.

The Defense Education Activity (DODEA) has indicated that furloughs will be in place at the start of the next school year 2013–2014. DODEA is planning an approach that will not risk a full year of academic credit for our students.

Furloughs will have no direct impact on the Department's ability to implement the new transition assistance program as directed by the Veterans Employment Initiative Task Force.

Mr. GINSBERG. Civilian furloughs will have a negative impact on our ability to provide, and maintain, a variety of services to our airmen and their families. Specifically, commissaries will close 1 additional day per week and MWR programs are projected to experience reduced hours of operation and/or closed facilities. Additionally, budget reductions will have a negative impact on our ability to timely transform our activities to make our Services more efficient.

With the exemption of 1,610 child care employees, we will continue to provide child care operations and minimize the impact to airmen and their families. Additionally, we do not anticipate Army and Air Force Exchange Service, TAP and Military Spouse Employment to be affected by furloughs.

2. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, if civilian furloughs, in response to sequestration, impact the mission of the Military Entrance Processing Stations, then what options does your Service have to ensure your recruit accessions are not disrupted?

Mr. LAMONT. By shifting funding, the Army addressed the risk of accession mission failure in fiscal year 2013 and fiscal year 2014 due to sequestration. Civilian furloughs will not affect the ability of Army accessioning agencies to achieve fiscal year 2013 accession missions. If the U.S. Military Entrance Processing Command curtails operations in fiscal year 2013 due to civilian furloughs, some delays in contracting new soldiers for entry into the Army in fiscal year 2014 may occur. For example, the Military Entrance Processing Stations will be shut down for one day per week. This will significantly increase applicant travel costs and adversely affect the streamlined process of new recruits. The Army plans to mitigate these delays by processing these soldiers after the beginning of the new fiscal year.

Mr. GARCIA. Marine Corps - All service recruiting will be impacted by civilian furloughs at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS); because 80 percent of MEPS personnel are civilians. The possible civilian furlough reduces their available processing capacity. Implementation of a 4-day processing week would likely degrade our accession efforts.

Navy - Navy ships its recruits from Monday through Thursday. We anticipate the furlough would shut down MEPS processing on Friday only. Therefore, Navy Recruiting accession mission may not be impacted as a result of planned MEPS furloughs in fiscal year 2013. However, with the planned 11 day MEPCOM furlough, Navy Recruiting would experience a New Contract mission shortfall of approximately 2,900 total new contracts for both Active component (AC) and Non-Prior Service Reserve component (RC). This shortfall represents approximately 15 percent of the remaining fiscal year 2013 New Contract mission of 19,675 (AC/RC). This shortfall would result in a 5 percent decrease in the Delayed Entry Program (DEP) posture for the beginning of fiscal year 2014. The reduction of the DEP posture from a target of 50 percent will increase our New Contract mission for fiscal year 2014. However, we anticipate meeting our accession mission in fiscal year 2014. If Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) furloughs continue into fiscal year 2014, MEPS capacity to process new contracts will be restricted and Navy's accession mission could be at moderate risk.

Mr. GINSBERG. As approximately 80 percent of MEPCOM employees are civilian, if fully implemented, the 11-day furlough (as announced on May 14, 2013) will have

a significant impact on MEPCOM's ability to process recruits and manage military accessions testing programs. Processing will be reduced from 5 days down to 4 days.

There are no options to overcome recruit processing disruptions as a result of the MEPCOM furlough. Another mechanism doesn't exist to qualify youth for military service. MEPCOM is the sole entity for enlisted accessions. The Air Force will adjust to the reduced processing capacity by tightly managing the available processing slots. The Air Force will ensure slots are first utilized to send fiscal year 2013 recruits to Basic Military Training (BMT), and then whatever slots remain will be prioritized to best meet fiscal year 2014 needs. These processing restrictions will force the Air Force to delay processing motivated applicants until slots become available at a later date.

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

3. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, it is unconscionable that servicemembers must wait many months to receive a disability determination from the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). While the Department of Defense (DOD) and the VA have made some progress in decreasing the amount of time it takes to get disability claims completed in the Integrated Disability Evaluation System (IDES), more work must be done. What is your Service doing to help the DOD and the VA doing to expedite claims through the system?

General BROMBERG. To assist the VA in managing this additional workload, the Army is providing personnel to perform administrative procedures to allow VA adjudicators to focus rating activities. Army is also making additional entries into the Veterans Tracking Application to allow VA to better manage cases in Benefits delivery phase of IDES. VA estimates this assistance will provide a 10–15 percent increase in the number of Ready for Decision cases over the 90-day period. We continue to explore and implement other solutions that provide the information that VA needs to finalize their rating decisions in a timelier manner.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. IDES performance data for April 2013, reflect that the average time to complete IDES processing for sailors is 258 days, the fewest in DOD. This is measured against an IDES goal of 295 days, which was established to ensure sailors receive all appropriate medical treatment, due process, and transition assistance while undergoing disability evaluation. Sailors continue to receive pay and benefits while going through the IDES, which helps narrow any "benefit gap."

Navy is supporting the VA portion of the IDES process through efforts to provide the VA with a complete Service Treatment Record and by ensuring VA claim development and medical appointments are not missed. We are also participating in a joint-DOD/VA effort to improve timeliness in transferring information included in the DD Form 214, "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty", which is needed to initiate benefits delivery.

Recent changes to the Transition Assistance Program and the Veterans Employment Initiative create a direct connection with VA counselors. As a result, awareness of benefits available through the VA is increasing, which may lead to an increase in the number of claims being filed prior to separation or retirement. Processing of such claims should be quicker since establishing service connection and access to medical records are typically easier before the servicemember transitions. Additionally, we have agreed to include an audiogram as part of our Separation Health Assessment (SHA) to establish a baseline for potential future VA evaluations.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps does not own the IDES process. However, on behalf of our marines we have successfully undertaken various advocacy measures to reduce processing times. The Marine Corps is working to improve processing times in coordination with the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery through teleconferences with IDES stakeholders. Additionally, we have been providing Marine Corps leadership with detailed IDES information, which has resulted in their ability to work closer with the Regional Medical Commanders on specific issues impacting IDES performance. The Marine Corps has provided the Physical Evaluation Board (PEB) processing center with five enlisted marines, in excess of their authorized allowance, to ensure their authorized manning is kept at 100 percent. Additionally, four senior noncommissioned officers, above the PEB's allowance are being provided to perform field-level counseling and case processing assistance. Since, the Marine Corps began tracking the performance of marines processing through the IDES (June 2011), the number of cases exceeding the 100-day goal for the Medical Evaluation Board phase has decreased by 91.8 percent (610 cases down to 50). The Marine

Corps will continue to work to identify and execute methods to ensure claims process expeditiously in the best interest of the marine.

General JONES. The Air Force is committed to improving the IDES timeliness to better serve airmen as they rehabilitate, reintegrate or transition from military service. We are diligently working various measures to improve the IDES timeliness. We have realigned manpower and made hiring a priority within the Air Force Personnel Center to assist the PEB.

The Air Force has partnered with OSD and the VA to enhance IDES information technology (IT) to create a seamless and integrated system to improve IDES timeliness. While DOD and VA develop an enterprise IT solution, the Air Force is exploring short-term IT solutions to expedite the transfer of IDES cases between the Military Treatment Facilities (MTF) and the Informal and Formal PEBs. In addition, we have improved communications between the VA, the Air Force Personnel Center, and the Air Force Surgeon General to ensure consistency of IDES tracked data. Finally, the Air Force rolled out its IDES pre-screening initiative to ensure the right airmen are referred into the IDES. The IDES pre-screen process provides a centralized review at the Air Force Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards Branch of potential IDES cases which may not meet retention standards. The intent of the pre-screening process is two-fold. First, to identify airmen who may be returned to duty (RTD), instead of entering the IDES, thus preserving resources and reducing hardship on the airman and the unit. Second, the process identifies airmen, who need a complete Medical Evaluation Board, and refers them to the IDES, preserving readiness and a fit force. The pre-screening process does not alter any stage of the IDES, airmen's rights remain intact and the Air Force ensures due-diligence. As of 10 Apr 2013, the Informal PEB adjudicated 978 cases referred into the IDES by our Personnel Center's Medical Retention Standards shop as a result of pre-screening. Of those, only 27 were returned to duty by the Informal PEB, for a 2.76 percent RTD rate, far below the 15–20 percent RTD rate historically seen prior to pre-screening implementation. We expect these major improvement strategies to improve the Air Force IDES timeliness by fall 2013.

4. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, do you believe that the VA is doing all that it can do to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication?

General BROMBERG. Yes. I believe our partners in the VA are doing everything they can to decrease the amount of time for disability case reviews and claims adjudication.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The delays in case review and adjudication are unacceptably long. At the same time, VA is coping with an enormous increase in claims being filed. We are very supportive of our VA partners in helping to decrease their disability case review and adjudication backlog. The Department of the Navy is moving ahead to support the VA's request to certify the Service Treatment Record completeness when forwarding for disability claim reviews. This will expedite the VA's ability for claim adjudication. Innovative solutions are always possible and we stand ready to assist the VA as they explore solutions for improvements.

General MILSTEAD. We are aware that the VA has objectives and key initiatives to reduce the case backlog. However, as a matter of protocol, the Marine Corps defers to VA for quantifiable data on their level of effort to decrease claims adjudication times. The Marine Corps Wounded Warrior Regiment, the military command charged with recovery care coordination for wounded, ill, and injured marines, regularly coordinates with VA on various disability-related matters. From an individual casework perspective, we find VA efforts to be complementary and oftentimes the actions of VA employees enhance our marines' recovery experiences, to include disability claims issues.

General JONES. DOD and VA have implemented several improvement strategies to improve the IDES PEB timeliness.

1. VA has added 109 personnel to reach 264 full-time equivalents for claims adjudication, and consolidated Army claims at Seattle Disability Rating Activity Site to reduce processing times.
2. VA has proactively engaged DOD to expedite adoption of Disability Benefits Questionnaires (DBQs) within the IDES Program.
3. To better support DOD and members of the Reserve components (RC), VA implemented a process to perform IDES Compensation and Pension examinations closer to the residence of RC servicemembers.
4. VA's Chief of Staff conducts bi-monthly internal Video Teleconferences (VTC) with Central Office and Field Executive staff to review IDES performance metric and discuss process improvement measures. VA also has joint monthly

VTCs with both Army and Navy/Marine Corps to discuss site performance and general collaboration opportunities.

5. VA's IDES leadership conducts weekly meetings with IDES leadership from Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Warrior Care Policy, and the Military Services. These meetings have been occurring since July 2011.
6. VA Central Office personnel conduct periodic site visits to identify best practices and provide assistance.
7. VA and DOD routinely collaborate to improve and refine policies and procedures.

Air Force continues to collaborate with VA to improve the overall disability evaluation process. Despite improvements, challenges still remain and all of the DOD is committed to working diligently with VA to continue streamlining and improving the overall disability process.

5. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, does the VA need additional resources to hire more claims adjudicators?

General BROMBERG. The Army does not know if VA requires additional resources to hire more claims adjudicators.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The VA continues to balance their workforce. We are confident the VA presented their defensible resource requirements in the President's budget.

General MILSTEAD. We defer to the VA for information on their manning and resource requirements.

General JONES. The Air Force continues to collaborate with VA to improve the overall disability evaluation process. Despite improvements, challenges still remain, the DOD and the Air Force are committed to working diligently with VA to continue streamlining and improving the overall disability process.

PROTECTING PROSPECTIVE RECRUITS

6. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, a recent tragic case in Maryland appears to have been a murder/suicide involving a prospective recruit and her recruiter. What guidance has your Service provided to ensure that prospective recruits and their parents or guardians are fully aware of the limits for relationships with recruiters?

General BROMBERG. Army Recruiter contact with newly contracted soldiers, prospects and applicants is highly restricted by Army policy. Recruiters who violate the regulations governing this contact are subject to disciplinary action, relief, or separation. Cards describing sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and applicants are given to all applicants upon first contact as well as to their parents. These cards are used by the US Army Recruiting Command in their recruitment of Regular Army and Army Reserve applicants. The Army National Guard has similar cards in development. In addition, all recruits in all the Army's components sign contracts which include descriptions of sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and members of the DEP.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy Recruiting Command (NRC) provides applicants information on the first day of their enlistment into the DEP at MEPS. Additionally, recruiters and their supervisor also provide the same information to the future sailor or and their parents or guardians during the 72-hour indoctrination. This policy is included in the Enlisted and Officer Recruiting Manuals. NRC also has a Fraternization Policy Acknowledgement that details the proper behaviors of future sailors and recruiters, which all future sailors must read and sign.

At the time of DEP enlistment, NRC provides all future sailors a Standards, Transitions, Acknowledgements, Requirements, and Training (START) Guide. Recruiters and immediate supervisors are required to review the contents with each future sailor during the 72-hour indoctrination. The START Guide contains information regarding Sexual Harassment and Fraternization. Additionally, the START Guide lists "Recruiter Prohibited Practices," which includes a prohibition on any relationship other than a formal, professional, relationship. Every Navy recruiter business card contains the following personal pledge from Commander NRC: "We at Navy Recruiting Command are committed to professional, honest, and respectful treatment of every prospect and applicant." Also included is the NRC headquarters number, which is answered by Admiral Gay's personal staff.

Finally, NRC is completing an intensive, updated SAPR Delayed Entry Program (SAPR-D) video presentation, which will be shown to every future sailor. It provides

training on the Navy's SAPR Program, fraternization and sexual harassment policies. The video clearly articulates and emphasizes the future sailor's rights and responses if they feel they have been violated or mistreated.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has enacted additional policy and products that augment long standing ethical standards and procedures between applicants and recruiters. We established the requirement that all officer candidates and members of the DEP read, sign, and certify a Statement of Understanding regarding sexual assault and sexual harassment. This document includes notification and reporting procedures, which are also included in our formal "Welcome Aboard" materials. Additionally, a required values-based training curriculum, which includes video vignettes and ethical decision discussions to include sexual misconduct, has been incorporated into the DEP for all accessions. All marines attending the Basic Recruiters School are provided formal instruction on an 'Ethics Package' that addresses specifically, relationship restrictions between applicants and recruiters, fraternization, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and alcohol issues and usage. Additionally a training product has been introduced for leaders at the recruiting station level to emphasize and reinforce ethics standards with their marines. This standardized product provides leaders videos and briefing points that require the interactive participation by their marines on the topic of instruction. All of the aforementioned were done to maintain and uphold the existing Marine Corps ethical standards of conduct between applicant and recruiter.

General JONES. Air Force Recruiting has instituted an aggressive and comprehensive program to inform and educate recruits and their parents on the subject of inappropriate behaviors, to include unprofessional relationships throughout the recruiting process. This program employs video, talking points, "Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Cards", and signed statements. The program clearly defines what constitutes an unprofessional relationship vs. professional relationship between recruits and their recruiters, and advises the recruits of their right and obligation to report suspected or actual cases. The program also outlines sources of assistance and steps to be taken to address concerns.

7. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what information does your Service require to be provided to prospective recruits to ensure that they have immediate access to assistance and intervention, if necessary, if they believe a recruiter is intending to take improper advantage of them?

General BROMBERG. Army Recruiter contact with newly contracted soldiers, prospects and applicants is highly restricted. Cards describing sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and applicants are given to all applicants upon first contact as well as to their parents. These cards are used by the U.S. Army Recruiting Command in their recruitment of Regular Army and Army Reserve applicants. The Army National Guard has similar cards in development. Applicants and recruiters are offered a hotline phone number on the card to report any violation of a safe and proper environment. In addition, all recruits in all the Army's components sign contracts which include descriptions of sexual harassment prohibitions and what the prohibited activities are for recruiters and members of the DEP. The contract also provides the applicant a recruiting agency senior leader's telephone number for reporting sexual harassment or prohibited activity violations.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Each Navy Recruiting Station has posters with Navy Recruiting District points of contact if applicants or future sailors have any issues during the recruiting process for which they desire assistance from someone other than their recruiter. Posters include the Department of Defense Safeline phone number and NRC Inspector General hotline number. Every applicant receives a business card from their recruiter that contains the recruiter's information on the front of the card and the following personal pledge from Commander, Navy Recruiting Command (CNRC) on the back: "We at Navy Recruiting Command are committed to professional, honest, and respectful treatment of every prospect and applicant." Also included is CNRC phone number, which is answered by Admiral Gay's personal staff. We provide additional information at the time of Delayed Enlistment Program enrollment while at Military Entrance Processing Station, and again during the 72-hour indoctrination. Command Hotline and NRC Headquarters phone numbers are provided.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has introduced new policy and products that augment long standing ethical standards and procedures between applicants and recruiters. Our efforts include but are not limited to the expansion of ethics instruction at the Recruiters School, sustainment training for the recruiting force, and for all new accessions a mandatory recruiter-driven values-based training program

and written ‘Statement of Understanding’ that address sexual misconduct and reporting procedures. A Marine recruiter’s immediate supervisor is identified during the initial process as an applicant’s or parent’s primary point of contact for any concerns or complaints, specifically including inappropriate conduct. Renewed command emphasis combined with improved education and information for applicants and parents increases the safety of our applicants and reinforces confidence in Corps-wide actions directed toward the prevention of sexual assaults.

General JONES. Air Force Recruiting Service (AFRS) personnel are required to provide all applicants with an “Air Force Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Card” as early as practical in the application process before Military Entrance Processing Command (MEPCOM) processing. This card clearly defines professional relationships to potential applicants and provides guidance on how to report any violations. Recruiters are directed to discuss and train DEP recruits on expectations.

In addition, each applicant views a video discussing professional relationships—what is professional and unprofessional, as well as expectations of recruits as Air Force members and what they can expect from their recruiter and the recruiting process. By defining what is and is not acceptable, the applicant knows what is expected and what is expected of the recruiter. This enhances the Rights/Responsibilities card—if the recruit notices unacceptable behavior, he/she can then act on it by contacting local Air Force leadership or the contacts listed on the card.

Each recruit has the opportunity to discuss potential misconduct when they visit the Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) for the first time. Here, away from his/her recruiter, our MEPS liaison completes a survey with each recruit and asks if there were any instances of misconduct or action/words that made the recruit uncomfortable. If so, leadership addresses the concerns with the recruit and investigates allegations further to determine if additional action is necessary.

Applicants will also receive periodic briefings from supervisors and squadron leadership during their time in the DEP. These briefings will further emphasize rights, roles, and responsibilities of all members as well as ways to report suspected or actual cases.

The survey process completed with the MEPS liaison in the recruiting process is repeated both in BMT and Technical Training. Essentially the survey becomes a cradle to grave document within the accessions and training continuum.

DEFENSE SEXUAL ASSAULT INCIDENT DATABASE

8. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, DOD has told us they have achieved full-deployment of the congressionally-mandated Defense Sexual Assault Incident Database (DSAID). Is your Service providing data to populate the database?

General BROMBERG. Yes. The Army pushes the DOD required sexual assault data to DSAID on a monthly basis using our Sexual Assault Data Management System (SADMS).

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy uses DSAID as a centralized, case-level, database for the collection and maintenance of information regarding sexual assaults. Navy Sexual Assault Response Coordinators (SARCs) use DSAID as a case management system, entering information within 48 hours of a report of sexual assault (96 hours in deployed locations presenting internet connectivity issues). DSAID includes available information about the nature of assaults, the victim, services offered to the victim, the offender, and disposition of reports associated with the assault. Naval Investigative Service uploads final case disposition weekly into DSAID.

General MILSTEAD. Yes. Full migration to the DSAID was completed in October 2012.

General JONES. Yes, the Air Force is providing data to populate DSAID.

9. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what information, specifically, is this database providing your Services’ leadership concerning sexual assault incidents?

General BROMBERG. The Army provides the required sexual assault data to DSAID from SADMS on a monthly basis. This information includes the type of report (Restricted or Unrestricted), type of assault (rape, forcible sodomy, aggravated sexual contact, etc), gender and rank of victim and alleged offenders, location (on/off post), investigation status, disposition status (court-martial, nonjudicial punishment, adverse administrative action, et cetera.) and victim services provided (counseling, healthcare, advocacy, legal, et cetera).

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The DSAID is a centralized, case-level, database for the collection and maintenance of information regarding sexual assaults, which Navy

has been using since October 2012. DSAID includes information about the nature of assaults, the victim, services offered to the victim, the offender, and the disposition of reports associated with the assault. Over time, as DSAID becomes populated with more case data, it will increasingly provide the ability to identify and manage trends, analyze risk factors or problematic circumstances, and assist with actions and plans to mitigate risks.

General MILSTEAD. DSAID provides Marine Corps leadership accurate information on sexual assault cases and trends, which will inform assessments and decisions regarding future programs and training efforts. DSAID affords the Services enhanced ability to provide comprehensive and standardized victim case management, improved overall administrative functionality, and accountability in the tracking of victim services. DSAID also allows for the Military Criminal Investigative Organization data to be linked directly to a case, ensuring investigative data is accurate and allows cases to be transferred between military Services without re-creating case information, a functionality that was not provided for previously in each individual Service database.

General JONES. The DSAID provides information on the following: Restricted and unrestricted reports, safety concerns identified, if the victim assessment was completed, status of investigation, location of the assault (on/off base), victim relationship to offender, and demographic information of the victim.

10. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, before this committee, DOD witnesses described the recently revised DOD-wide policy on the Sexual Assault Program to standardize prevention, health care, victim safety, training and response efforts, and to clearly convey the role of servicemembers and employees in sexual assault prevention and recovery. This committee is concerned that medical care providers were not fully aware of their obligations concerning restricted reports, including the obligation to withhold disclosure to the chain of command. What actions have been taken to ensure standardization with response to protecting the sanctity of restricted reports?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army follows DOD policy and requires our healthcare providers to notify a SARC when a sexual assault victim seeks care at a MTF. The SARC (if not present with the victim) will then respond to the victim as quickly as possible.

Health care providers are trained to safeguard the confidentiality of medical information and maintain it in accordance with current Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) guidelines regardless of whether the soldier elects restricted or unrestricted reporting. Improper disclosure of covered communications and improper release of medical information are prohibited and may result in disciplinary actions under the Uniform Code of Military Justice, loss of credentials, or other adverse personnel or administrative actions.

Additionally, each Army MTF has a Sexual Assault Care Coordinator (SACC), Sexual Assault Clinical Provider (SACP), and a SARC who train other healthcare providers and healthcare personnel on their requirements regarding the preservation of restricted reports.

Mr. GARCIA. Bureau of Medicine and Surgery Instruction 6310.11A (Sexual Assault Prevention and Response Medical-Forensic Program) has been recently revised and signed on May 2, 2013. This policy establishes the training requirements for all health care providers who will complete medical-forensic examinations.

A subset of the multi-disciplinary policy revision working group has been convened to oversee and support implementation of policy guidance. The training is 14 hours in length and in a standardized format that supports health care providers in completing a Sexual Assault Forensic Examination (SAFE), reviews the SAFE kit and contents, chain of custody, preparing to be a factual witness and Navy specific policy guidance and reporting options. Restricted reporting is thoroughly covered in this training as well as the current medical response training required of all Navy Medical Department personnel. Documentation of completion is required and metrics have been established to support tracking of training implementation.

Mr. GINSBERG. DOD and the Air Force have established policy concerning restricted reporting cases as detailed in Department of Defense Instruction (DODI) 6495.02 and Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-6001. Sexual assault policy pertaining to medical care is listed in AFI 44-102. All sexual assault cases are referred to a SARC who insures the victim is briefed on their options for reporting. If the victim elects restricted reporting, then all medical assessments are completed but no reporting occurs to command authorities. Documentation of the medical assessment is flagged to prevent unauthorized release. In addition healthcare providers are required to take standardized first responder training.

11. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what additional challenges do you see in attaining the required level of standardization?

Mr. LAMONT. I do not see any challenges in standardization that the Services and DOD, working together, have not already addressed. Two examples include the decisions by DOD to standardize SARCs and Victim Advocate (VA) credentialing requirements and train sexual assault investigators from all Services at the U.S. Army Military Police School.

Mr. GARCIA. Each Military Service has a unique culture and operating environment. Beyond that, sexual assault prevention, sexual assault victim support, and sexual assault criminal investigations and prosecutions are overlapping but separate areas of activity.

First, we need to better distinguish between specific activities that should be performed in just about the same way everywhere, and those where tailored approaches may be more effective. Sexual assault victim support is a good example of the former—victims should expect the same services everywhere. Sexual assault prevention is a good example of the latter—the Services need flexibility to implement strategies that work for them.

Second, we need to evolve beyond standardizing exactly how to do things, and instead explore performance-based standards for key aspects of our processes that are most important to those affected. That will be hard work, and it will require genuine collaboration. For example, we want to know what aspects of our victim support processes are most important to victims themselves, so we can focus on making them more personal and effective.

Mr. GINSBERG. DSAIDS is the system of record for all reports of sexual assault. The Navy and Air Force both update each incident (restricted and unrestricted) reported into DSAIDS while the Army uses their Sexual Assault Data Management System (SADMS) which interfaces with DSAIDS. Each Service participates on the OSD SAPRO Change Control Board (CCB) to ensure standardization and system improvements.

12. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what additional tools does your Service need in order to continue to reduce—with the goal of eliminating—sexual assault?

Mr. LAMONT. Continuing our partnership with Congress is necessary so we can work together toward our common goal of eliminating sexual assault. Recent legislation has facilitated that effort. However, it is our responsibility to establish the positive organizational climate and culture needed to appropriately prevent and respond to sexual assault.

An area where Congress may be able to assist is to establish programs in communities and schools that counteract the negative social influencers that contribute to behavior that may lead to sexual assault.

Mr. GARCIA. We need more expert resources for investigations of alleged sexual assault crimes. NCIS has come a long way in the past several years. They have implemented impressive special training, and they have hired criminal investigators with civilian expertise, but the workload impact of new requirements to investigate all alleged sexual assaults, regardless of severity, is daunting.

We also need to establish new, tailored, programs for sailors and marines who have been victims of sexual assault. We are in the early stages of developing such programs. Sexual assault victims have an especially high risk of re-victimization, and we must break that cycle by providing peer support and personal tools to help them succeed and fulfill their personal and professional goals without unduly labeling them or undermining their performance of primary duties.

We are in the process of expanding across the entire Navy Department best practices from local pilot projects involving focused, synchronous, SAPR efforts. We must maintain visible and consistent senior leadership engagement working across organizational boundaries to change our culture and re-shape the attitudes and behaviors of our sailors and marines. It will require dogged commitment and perseverance over a prolonged effort. Key to our success will be our ability to partner across the Department of the Navy uniformed and civilian leadership to identify common goals and standards while implementing effective solutions that work in various settings and operating environments.

Mr. GINSBERG. Air Force leaders have worked diligently towards the goal of eliminating sexual assault from our ranks. While there is no single tool to fix the sexual assault problem, we're attacking it from every angle. The Air Force is constantly evaluating our techniques and mediums to provide education and training content that will increase awareness of sexual assault and the importance of prevention, intervention, and victim care. Additionally, we are bolstering the investigative and

prosecutorial process to show we're serious about taking action against offenders, which we believe will increase confidence in the process. This is evidenced by the introduction of the Special Victims' Counsel (SVC), effective January 28, 2013, which has had the greatest influence on victim empowerment and willingness to cooperate in the military justice system. Prior to the implementation of our SVC program, the rate of change from restricted to unrestricted reports was 17 percent. Now approximately 55 percent of our victims assigned to a SVC change from restricted to unrestricted reports.

13. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, some have suggested that it would be appropriate to incorporate standardized assessments of commanders' performance in prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy and assessment of sexual assault response and prevention lines of effort. What is your assessment of the feasibility of implementing commanders' performance in service-specific performance appraisals?

General BROMBERG. It is very appropriate to assess all officers and noncommissioned officers (NCO) on their enforcement of SAPR principles including their establishment or support of a positive command climate. The current Officer and NCO Evaluation Report allows for comment regarding support of Equal Opportunity and Sexual Harassment. Army Regulation 600-20, Army Command Policy also encourages comment for this topic. The future Officer Evaluation Report (OER) and Non-commissioned OER will continue to stress this topic and will be further reinforced by the Army Doctrine Reference Publication 6-22, Army Leadership under the Leader Competency of Trust.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Incorporating standardized assessments of a commander's performance in prevention, investigation, accountability, advocacy, and assessment of sexual assault response and prevention lines-of-effort, could be accomplished using the current Navy fitness report by amending our governing instruction to require such an assessment, or by revising the current form. Additionally, current Navy fitness reports evaluate an officer's performance related to Command or Organizational Climate/Equal Opportunity.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps Fitness Report system provides the official evaluation and record of an officer's performance and contains a section entirely dedicated to leadership. This section evaluates the commander's ability to set the example, communicate effectively, provide direction, and motivate, which includes his or her ability to develop, lead, and ensure the well-being of subordinates. Ensuring the well-being of subordinates necessitates that officers demonstrate a genuine concern for their safety—a characteristic rooted in the defining Marine Corps values of honor, courage, and commitment. The commander's efforts must enhance the concentration and focus of the subordinate on unit mission accomplishment, which includes setting an environment free of any criminal behaviors, such as sexual assault.

In line with the Secretary of Defense (SECDEF) memorandum dated 6 May 2013, the Marine Corps is exploring methods to assess the performance of our commanders in establishing command climates that foster dignity and respect. To this end, the Commandant has directed the development of new command climate surveys to be administered within 30 days of a new commander taking command and at the commanding officer's 12-month mark. Designed to measure the "health" of a particular command, the survey will cover a spectrum of issues, including sexual assault, and will be integrated with the ongoing efforts to stop all behavior-related offenses, including sexual harassment, hazing, and alcohol misuse. This initiative fulfills a specific provision in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) and the 6 May SECDEF memo, which also mandates that survey results be provided for review to the next level up in the chain of command.

General JONES. The current Air Force Officer Performance Report (OPR) already evaluates a commander on all leadership performance factors which include the implementation of the SAPR program within their units.

14. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, the annual report on sexual assault at the Service academies revealed that many people who enter the armed services have experienced and report sexual assault or unwanted sexual contact that occurred before they entered the Service Academies or the armed services. What could your Service be doing to improve support to men and women in the accession process, to identify whether individuals have experienced sexual assault?

General BROMBERG. The U.S. Military Academy does not screen applicants for a history of sexual assault, but does provide all new cadets information about the Army's Sexual Harassment/Assault Response and Prevention Program.

When a New Cadet self-identifies during Cadet Basic Training, or subsequently over the course of their career as a Cadet, the cadet is referred to a SARC or Victim Advocate who provides essential support and care to the victim.

This support includes, but is not limited to, providing information on available reporting options (restricted and unrestricted), available resources to assist the victim in the healing process (e.g., on- and off-post counseling, chaplaincy, DOD SafeHelpline), and due process and investigation procedures (legal assistance and/or law enforcement to include Criminal Investigation Division—even if serving in a liaison role between civilian law enforcement and the military for off-post incidents).

The Victim Advocate provides continual support until the victim states that she/he no longer requires assistance or until departure from the academy, at which point she/he receives information about resources available after departure.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy has a thorough application process, which includes detailed medical screening of applicants at Military Entrance and Processing Station (MEPS). Although not asked explicitly, are questioned by MEPS Chief Medical Officers using a Supplemental Health Screening Questionnaire to determine if they have experienced any significant abusive events in their life.

To improve support for men and women during the accession process, NRC has developed training focused specifically to indoctrinate them on military SAPR policies, to help prevent sexual harassment and assault, and to provide them with procedures to act on an incident that might occur. In addition to attending this training, there are a wide variety of products and resources (e.g., videos, posters, and brochures) recruiters use for local training programs and to increase awareness with the future sailors in the DEP.

The U.S. Naval Academy (USNA) also has a thorough application process, which includes medical screening of applicants. USNA ensures that each entering freshman is made aware of the services of the Academy's SAPR Office, including medical, counseling and advocacy, and legal assistance. All incoming plebes receive a SAPR indoctrination brief within 14 days of arrival. This session includes an in-depth overview of the USNA SAPR Program; a discussion on sexual assault, consent, types of reports, and services available; and stresses that these services are available regardless of when they experienced the sexual or interpersonal violence. Academy SAPR staff follow up with plebes, conduct refresher training, answer questions and again stress the availability of services.

As a result of findings in the most recent Service Academy Gender Relations survey, the USNA has implemented additional process changes for the entering Class of 2017 that will arrive this June. Specifically, during the Indoctrination-Day check-in each plebe will be asked in a confidential setting if they have experienced sexual assault prior to entering the Academy. Regardless of response, each plebe will receive a data sheet identifying available services and points of contact, should they desire to use them. This information will provide the SAPR Office and chain-of-command with real-time data on our at-risk population, and provide individuals information they can use to access services discreetly.

Navy is sensitive to the fact that asking explicit questions regarding sexual assault could lead to revictimization of an applicant, which is something that should be carefully avoided. DOD is currently conducting a review of the applicant accessions process as one aspect of the 2013 DOD SAPR Strategic Plan released by the Secretary of Defense on May 6, 2013.

General MILSTEAD. Sexual assault policies are explained to all members within 14 days of their entrance on active duty. The brief includes how to report a sexual assault and what supportive resources are available pertaining to care and justice. During the process, servicemembers are afforded the opportunity to speak to a Victim Advocate.

Servicemembers who were assaulted prior to entry in the military are provided the same resources and care as those who were assaulted during their service in the military. All victims are given the option to file a restricted or unrestricted report and, after exercising this option, are assigned a Victim Advocate and SARC and afforded medical and counseling services. If the case is unrestricted, it is referred to the Naval Criminal Investigative Service and the victim's command is notified.

General JONES. The U.S. Air Force Academy (USAFA) has programs in place to inform incoming cadets about available helping agencies and resources to assist them, along with information on how to access those services. USAFA makes every effort to provide an environment where these victims can thrive as they begin their military careers. In these instances, our goal is to ensure the victim's choices are honored and that they are comfortable coming forward to get help and report if they choose. USAFA will also cooperate to support the civil authority with jurisdiction

should the cadet pursue filing charges. Several initiatives are in place to help victims of trauma connect with support mechanisms.

Under the current program, basic cadets are briefed on sexual assault and associated helping agencies on day two after their arrival. This briefing addresses coping with assaults that may have occurred prior to coming to USAFA. The briefing also discusses the numerous resources available to include: SARC; chain of command; Military Guidance Officers—cadets trained to interface with other helping agencies; chaplains; counseling services; equal opportunity experts; medical providers.

Later in basic training, in conjunction with sexual assault awareness training, anonymous polls are conducted to get an idea of the number of basic cadets previously assaulted and to remind them of the resources available to them. Individuals are not asked to identify themselves to protect their ability to file a restricted report, if desired. Some basic cadets are unaware that they experienced a sexual assault until they receive the training and understand the Air Force definitions.

Similar to USAFA, Air Education and Training Command has an aggressive and comprehensive program for new recruits regarding proper relationships and to explain and educate them on their rights and how to report inappropriate conduct. In October 2012, AFRS rolled out its Dissuade, Deter, Detect, Hold Accountable (D3A) program to train recruiters and applicants alike on professional relationships. The D3A program is designed to baseline professional relationships from day one as they work through the recruiting process and follows them to BMT. Following initial professional relationship training, applicants are provided an “Applicant Rights/Responsibilities Card” and both the recruiter and applicant sign a “Professional Relationship Contract”. Professional relationship training is then reinforced at each stage of the recruiting process. Additionally, the applicant is provided the opportunity to address relationship concerns/issues through a “Professionalism Questionnaire” provided at initial Military Entrance Processing Station (MEPS) processing and on “ship day” when they depart for BMT.

COMMAND CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

15. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what percent of your commands conduct command climate assessments?

General BROMBERG. According to the records maintained in the Equal Opportunity Reporting System the Army is 80 percent on the completion rate for this fiscal year. Our units rely on the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute Organization Climate Survey (DEOCS), a web-based survey instrument, and it was offline from September 12 through mid March 13 due to budget issues which account for a lower rate. Units relied on the Army Research Institute paper and pencil survey during the time DEOCS was offline and this is a time consuming process and caused delays in meeting the mandated timelines in our regulation.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. All commanders are required to conduct a Command Climate Assessment (CCA) within 90 days of taking command and yearly thereafter. In fiscal year 2012, 90 percent of Navy commands participated in the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), before the system went down on 19 September 2012. However, the DEOCS is just one portion of a CCA. Echelon II commands are charged with tracking their subordinate command’s completion of the CCA. We entrust Commanders to hold their Commanding Officers accountable for 100 percent completion of the CCA.

General MILSTEAD. 100 percent. All commands conduct climate assessments in accordance with current DOD, Navy, and Marine Corps directives.

General JONES. All Air Force units have the opportunity and are encouraged to conduct climate assessments by the Equal Opportunity (EO) Office. EO Offices, on behalf of the commander, administer Unit Climate Assessments (UCA) on organizations that have 50 or more personnel (both military and civilian combined). For those organizations with less than 50 members, commanders are not afforded the UCA; however, they are able to utilize other forms of EO climate assessment such as Out and Abouts, Focus Groups, and Interviews. In addition, the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey (DEOCS) is available through the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) to gauge the climate of the organization. The difference between the UCA and the DEOCS is that contractors are permitted to be survey participants in the DEOCS.

The UCA is required every 2 years or upon commander’s request. With the passage of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, the new requirements necessitate annual climate assessments and they must be completed within 120 days upon assumption

of command. The Air Force is currently revising Air Force regulations to reflect the new requirements.

16. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what are your Services doing to improve the regularity of command climate assessments?

General BROMBERG. We updated Army Regulation 600-20 in September 2012 to read "Company level commander (or their equivalents) will conduct a unit command climate survey within 30 days of assuming command (120 days for ARNG and USAR), again at 6 months, and annually thereafter. Assessments must include a facilitated small group discussion of topics. Company level commanders (or equivalents) may supplement any survey efforts with individual and group interviews, the analysis of unit records, and statistical information (awards, promotions, reenlistments, incidents of misconduct resulting in UCMJ, and EO complaint reports)." We report and track the compliance rates for command climate surveys.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Every commanding officer is required to conduct a command climate assessment within 90 days of taking command and annually thereafter. The Navy will continue to track the completion of the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI) Organizational Climate Survey (DEOCS), by Echelon II command, on a quarterly basis.

General MILSTEAD. Current changes in the command climate survey requirements will result in commanders surveying their commands within 30 days via the Defense Equal Opportunity Climate Survey and annually thereafter. Results of the completed surveys will be provided to the next higher level command.

General JONES. The overall Air Force climate assessment is conducted annually. Current regulatory guidelines require units to conduct climate assessments in units once every 2 years and upon request by a commander. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 has a requirement to conduct a climate assessment annually and within 120 days upon assumption of command by a new commander.

The Air Force is considering several courses of action on how to increase the regularity of command climate assessments with existing resources, including increasing the use of focus group interviews and various other survey assessments.

17. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what is your Service doing to evaluate the results of the command climate assessments to ensure necessary follow-up action?

General BROMBERG. Equal Opportunity Advisors assist the company commanders with accomplishing the command climate assessment by assisting with completion of a command climate survey, focus groups, evaluation of complaints requests for assistance (if any). Once the assessment is complete, EOAs assist the commander with developing a training plan to address any issues discovered during the assessment and provide guidance on the feedback required to the unit to complete the assessment cycle. Commanders and EOAs then brief equal opportunity training during Quarterly Training Briefings to their superior Commander. Additional command climate surveys will be reviewed by the superior Command on a research basis.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Each Immediate Superior in Command (ISIC) ensures subordinate commanders assess their command climate within 90 days of assuming command with annual follow-up assessments during their command tenure. Every commanding officer is required to provide an executive summary of survey results and any intended actions, within 60 days of completing a command climate assessment. The ISIC also ensures necessary follow-up action on the results of command climate assessments. Additionally, we are constantly evaluating what we can do to increase the effectiveness of our leaders in command. A working group has been assigned to evaluate and make recommendations on expanding and reinforcing supervisory command relationships. By identifying potential or ongoing issues early, timely correction is likely to set conditions for a successful command environment.

General MILSTEAD. The Commandant of the Marine Corps has directed new command climate requirements to be administered within 30 days of a new commander taking command and annually thereafter, in order to continue fostering a positive climate within each Marine Corps unit. The survey covers a spectrum of personnel issues and will be closely integrated with ongoing efforts focused on reducing all behavior-related offenses. The results of the surveys will be measured in order to obtain accurate knowledge on the health of each command. To assure accountability, the results of the surveys will be shared with each commander's next higher headquarters. The Commandant's intent is to provide commanding officers with the necessary tools to identify high-risk behaviors and positively act on behalf of the health of their commands.

General JONES. The Air Force Climate Survey is conducted biennially and the results are out-briefed to the Secretary of the Air Force and released to the units. Commanders with ten or more respondents are provided survey results along with a guide developed by behavioral scientists from the Air Force Personnel Center, Directorate of Manpower containing specific recommendations and lists of resources to improve their unit climate. Leaders that use previous survey results to make improvements with the organization have yielded higher levels of agreement in all areas.

In addition to the Air Force Climate Survey, the Air Force has Equal Opportunity (EO) subject matter experts that conduct UCAs, analyze the results, and provide an out-brief to unit commanders. During the out-brief, EO professionals discuss recommendations and strategies for problem resolution and offer follow-up services to help resolve EO or managerial related problems. With the passage of the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013, UCAs will be conducted annually, rather than biennially, and within 120 days upon assumption of command.

FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

18. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what is your assessment of the performance of your Services' Federal Voting Assistance Program (FVAP)?

Mr. LAMONT. It is my assessment the Army has a very robust voting assistance program. We have a large network of Installation Voting Assistance (IVA) offices and Unit Voting Assistance Officers (UVAOs) who are providing voting assistance on a year round basis. In 2012, the Army voting assistance program had over 7,800 appointed and trained active duty UVAOs who provided information to eligible voters within their organizations. The Army also created Public Service Announcements that were seen overseas and state-side and participated in Absentee Voters Week and Armed Forces Voters Week to encourage eligible voters to register and vote. The Army voting assistance program has also successfully leveraged social media by using Facebook and Twitter, and established and maintain a vigorous communications strategy. We empower individual voters and continue to provide voting assistance and guidance to soldiers, civilians, and their dependents.

Mr. GARCIA. The U.S. Marine Corps has an effective Voting Assistance Program (VAP) and the Marine Corps is complying with the requirements put forward by title 10, U.S.C., section 1566 and the DOD FVAP. This assessment is based upon the results of 19 inspections conducted during calendar year 2012 and 7 inspections so far during calendar year 2013 at all levels of command. The Marine Corps VAP operates in accordance with established policies and procedures and is effective in assisting eligible voters. The Marine Corps is confident that servicemembers and their eligible family members were aware of all 2012 voting events and were provided assistance and documentation for all absentee voting requirements. The current Marine Corps order covering VAP was republished on 1 April 2013, and incorporates previously issued interim guidance as was required by changes to the law from the MOVE Act that passed as part of NDAA for Fiscal Year 2010 (P.L. 111-84) and updated DOD Instructions. The Marine Corps will continue to inspect, review, and provide guidance to update appropriate Marine Corps orders, policies, and procedures to ensure eligible voters have the opportunity to exercise their voting rights.

Mr. GINSBERG. The Air Force FVAP is a successful program within the department at all levels of command. In 2012, the Air Force Major Command inspection teams reviewed 134 Voting Assistance Programs at squadron, group, wing and command levels with just 12 discrepancies reported. All discrepancies were classified as "minor deficiencies" by the SAF/IG. As a result, the Air Force is confident we have an effective FVAP in place and military members have the resources to exercise their right to vote.

19. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what Service-specific initiatives have you implemented to improve compliance with FVAP and to maximize the opportunity for servicemembers to exercise their right to vote?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army welcomes the responsibility for providing voting assistance to our servicemembers, their family members, and our civilian employees. Before the 2012 elections, we made weekly phone and/or e-mail communications to IVA offices to ensure proper manning and updated any changes to office contact information. The Army continues to complete monthly phone and/or e-mail communications to the IVA offices. To maximize voter participation, over 7,800 active duty UVAOs

provided voting assistance at the unit level. They presented registration and voting information during meetings, training sessions, and formations. The UVAOs provided assistance and encouraged servicemembers to access the FVAP website for fast and efficient voter registration and assistance. Some of the Army voting activities for 2012 included participation in Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week with IVA offices setting up voting information tables in high traffic areas. To increase voter awareness and participation, the Army Voting Assistance Program uses Facebook, Twitter, public service announcements, print media, and mass e-mail distribution. The Army continues to use collaborative tools and information sharing with FVAP to push current and relevant voting information to our voting assistance personnel and eligible voters.

Mr. GARCIA. In addition to publishing a revision to the Marine Corps order on 1 April 2013, several steps were taken to increase voting awareness, improve compliance with FVAP and maximize voting opportunities for servicemembers. The Marine Corps released two video public service announcements for inclusion on all units annual training and Marine Corps movie theaters during the months leading up to the 2012 Federal Election. There are 18 IVA Offices established on bases and stations across the Marine Corps in accordance with FVAP directives, and every unit with 25 persons or more are required to have a Voting Assistance Officer appointed in writing by the Commander of the unit to assist and train all personnel in voting processes and responsibilities. Family member outreach for voting age dependents is also coordinated at Headquarters Marine Corps, and the Family Readiness Officer network is utilized to convey voting and election information to the spouses and other voting age dependents.

The 2012 election cycle saw a wide range of initiatives taken by the Navy to provide a better-than-ever level of support to voters. Efforts included the full implementation of the MOVE Act and establishment of an IVA Office at every Navy Installation, the engagement of senior leadership, strengthening of command level voting assistance programs, innovative marketing and awareness efforts, and training. The Navy took a holistic approach to ensure that voters were aware of elections and their rights and afforded every opportunity to register and vote absentee.

Mr. GINSBERG. The U.S. Air Force (USAF) Voting Assistance Program initiated several initiatives to improve compliance with FVAP and title 42, U.S.C.

1. The USAF made a change to Air Force Policy Directive (AFPD) 36-31 which effects the requirement for an IVA office in the Military and Overseas Voter Empowerment (MOVE) Act, establishing the office as a voter registration agency within the installation headquarters organization reporting directly to the installation commander
2. USAF moved ahead quickly with changes to the AF Voting Action Plan in December 2009, implementing various requirements of the MOVE Act prior to OSD and FVAP releasing any guidance (i.e., service requirements for moving members and deployers immediately implemented).
3. USAF implemented the "Core Unit Voting Assistance Officer (UVAO)" position which is authorized by the installation commander's appointment letter for the IVA office. IVA Offices are given the authority to appoint up to four Core UVAOs to assist in the manning and workload of the IVA Office, which remains an unfunded mandate to date. Special training is required for IVA Office and Core UVAO positions.
4. USAF produced an "IVA Office Handbook" supplement to the "FVAP IVA Office Handbook" on 30 Aug 2010. To date, seven versions have been published. In May 2013, the Handbook contents are being incorporated into the AF Voting Action Plan so that IVA Offices and other IVA Office workers have a single document for the execution of the AF Voting Assistance Program.
5. USAF established an effective communication dissemination system from Service Voting Action Officer (SVAO) to IVA Office to UVAO to all Squadron members and their voting age family members. Any voting news items generated by FVAP were immediately passed on to voters through this streamlined network.
6. USAF IVA Offices are required to be clearly marked and advertised on base, giving voters a visible office; and UVAOs were not forgotten. 85 percent of voting assistance during the past quarter was done at the unit level by UVAOs.
7. USAF SVAO scripted a Public Service Announcement which the USAF Chief of Staff released in January 2012, encouraging military members, DOD civilians and their families to vote.
8. USAF SVAO implemented a new Staff Assistance Visit (inspection) requirement for IVA Offices to perform on all assigned UVAOs between Feb and March of every even-numbered year.

9. IVA Offices are instructed to partner with military and civilian personnel offices to have the IVA Office included on in/out-processing checklists for Permanent Change of Station (PCS) and deployment processing as well as for address changes.
10. USAF maintains an online website that allows IVA Offices and UVAOs to access all current documents and guidance; search for and submit "best practice" documents; and communicate via the forum.
11. USAF IVA Offices are encouraged to work with local election officials (LEOs) during biannual Armed Forces Voters Week and Absentee Voters Week events to invite the LEOs on base to assist in the booth for local voters.
12. USAF IVA Offices are provided an intuitive, stand-alone, forms-based "IVA Office's Database" for easy management of UVAO manning and training requirements as well as documenting UVAO "due-outs" (tasks), voters week plans and after action reports. Reports are generated at the push of a single button.
13. The USAF Voting Action Plan provides IVA Offices and UVAOs multiple tools to use in the execution of their voting assistance duties. These include instructions for ordering forms, posters, and banners online at no cost to their units; template voting assistance information forms; and a biannual chronological sequence of events.
14. Various other measures were taken following the passing of the MOVE Act: (a) IVA Office voicemail and email is answered within 48 hours (24 hours if within 60 days of a Federal election); and (b) USAF SVAO hosted a webinar to train IVA Offices on establishing and running IVA Offices (three webinars done to ensure time zones around the world were supported).

OPERATION TEMPO OVERSIGHT

20. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, what is your assessment of your Services' Operation Tempo (OPTEMPO) reporting and how well are we meeting our OPTEMPO requirements to reduce stress on our servicemembers and their families?

General BROMBERG. Overall the Army is meeting its operational tempo, with the exception of the Army Reserve. The Active component goal is a ratio of 1:2 (time deployed vs. time home). The Active component is exceeding this goal with a ratio of 1:2.46. The Army National Guard is achieving the goal of 1:4 (time deployed vs. time home). The Army Reserve is continuing to improve and currently at a ratio of 1:3.5.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Current Navy individual personnel tempo (ITEMPO) reporting is effective and we remain focused on reporting compliance and accuracy. In April 2013, Navy achieved 94.8 percent reporting compliance which included 98.9 percent of all Navy personnel represented in compliant activities. Additionally, we are in the process of improving our capability to analyze ITEMPO data for use in assessing ITEMPO days away from homeport and its relationship to stress on the force.

General MILSTEAD. For individual marines, we actually report and track Personnel Tempo/Deployment Tempo, for how much time marines are deployed or away from home. Our reporting is consistent with OSD's guidance on same. Our reporting indicates that generally both Active component and Reserve component marines are deploying for shorter durations and/or less frequently, which we expect will reduce the stress on our marines and their families.

General JONES. The Air Force is successfully meeting our operational requirements. We have approximately 186,000 Active Duty airmen supporting combatant commander operations. However, some airmen have a higher Operational Tempo (OPTEMPO) than others. We assess OPTEMPO within our career field stress assessment. Approximately 10 percent of our Active-Duty Force resides in stressed career fields, of which, OPTEMPO is a contributing factor. The Air Force prioritizes force management policy and programs, including bonuses, to maintain sufficient numbers of personnel in critical career fields to reduce stress and meet operational requirements. Additionally, we provide airmen a predictive deployment schedule, via the Air Expeditionary Force construct, so they can plan and prepare their families for their deployments.

LANGUAGE AND CULTURE TRAINING

21. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, military members with language and culture training are essential to a

U.S. global force. The NDAA for Fiscal Year 2013 authorized the Secretary of Defense to transform the National Language Service Corps (NLSC) from a pilot program to a permanent program, and also to enhance the ability of our Federal agencies to hire people with strategic foreign language skills and as National Security Education Program awardees. What are your Services' goals with respect to the capabilities represented by the NLSC?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army continues to support and leverage the capabilities provided by the NLSC under the NDAA. Currently, the Army works with NLSC's recruiters to hire language proficient soldiers departing the Army to work at NLSC. We display NLSC advertisements on various portals targeting language qualified soldiers and civilians. Additionally, the NLSC provides an overview of their organizational opportunities to our O9L soldiers (native speakers of foreign languages who serve as interpreters) planning to depart military service. The Army is very active in supporting this program's growth. In addition, the Army leverages NLSC capabilities to fill short-term foreign language requirements that cannot be met within. Some of these categories include: role players, interpretation, translation and analysis, training (instruction), and administrative language support services.

In order to respond to increasing demands for foreign language skills, the NLSC plans to increase membership from the current 4,200 to at least 5,500 personnel along with the number of languages/dialects represented is expected to increase from 283 to at least 350 by fiscal year 2015. The Army continues to work with the Secretary of Defense to more actively expand the NLSC membership, reaching out to groups in which the government has already invested along with leveraging the capabilities of this organization.

Mr. GARCIA. Marine Corps - The Marine Corps recognizes the valuable service provided by the NLSC. In fact, Marine units have employed NLSC services on several occasions for operational and exercise support and foreign language instruction. As a matter of practice, however, the Marine Corps will seek assistance from the NLSC only after all internal Marine Corps options to satisfy language requirements could not be met through organic Service capabilities. For this reason, the Marine Corps has not set any specific parameters or goals for the employment of NLSC services. Rather, the Marine Corps requests NLSC assistance on an ad hoc basis similar to other language resources including the National Virtual Translation Center. The Marine Corps has implemented several programs to increase foreign language capacity and capability within its uniformed and civilian workforce, to include the Regional, Culture and Language Familiarization program for career marines; expanding the Foreign Area Officer program; and the creation of a Foreign Area Specialist program for senior enlisted marines.

Navy - Navy recognizes the broad range of language and culture capabilities provided by the NLSC, and finds particular value in their ability to satisfy short notice requirements. Navy has utilized NLSC resources for both standard fleet operations and humanitarian missions. NLSC personnel have served as interpreters/translators for multinational maritime exercises when service personnel either were not available or non-existent for the task.

In the future, Navy plans to formalize its process for filling ad hoc requests for language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) support. To that end, and similar to Navy's employment of the National Virtual Translation Center, the NLSC will be included as an option when organic assets are unavailable or nonexistent. Therefore, the intent is not to establish explicit, quantifiable goals for usage. Navy will continue to train its own assets based on identified, validated, and documented requirements. For ad hoc LREC support requests, Navy will try to use sailors first and will consider other government options afterwards. Navy is pursuing several initiatives to enhance LREC capability within its force, but it is neither reasonable nor fiscally sound to invest in LREC training and sustainment to meet all contingency needs. Navy plans to coordinate as necessary with the Defense Language and National Security Education Office on any policies, procedures, or business practices to improve or better utilize the NLSC.

Mr. GINSBERG. The purpose of the NLSC is to have a pool of language-capable individuals available to support sudden and short-term requirements. The NLSC construct is not currently used to support the type of exercises and operations conducted by the Air Force. Rather, the Air Force meets its language needs by deliberately developing individuals to meet its requirements. The Air Force intends to encourage separating and retiring airmen who have existing language skills to join the NLSC.

MARKETING AND ADVERTISING

22. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, one effect of sequestration was that DOD quickly moved to end service advertising, marketing, and outreach programs that have been used to aid in recruiting. What is your assessment of the value of funding these programs, and the projected impact to recruiting if these programs are not funded?

General BROMBERG. It is essential that the Army conduct a vigorous and sustained marketing and advertising program in order to recruit a quality force capable of handling 21st century mission challenges.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy currently has an annual accession mission of over 45,000 officer and enlisted sailors with potential recruits dispersed throughout the country. Recruiting quality individuals is the first step in ensuring that we have intelligent, capable, high quality people in the future force. Paid advertising, marketing and outreach are critical components in our efforts to attain the proper recruiting mix. Working together to inform the American public of opportunities available in the Navy, they collectively communicate efficient and effective messages that favorably impact recruiting mission and contribute to end strength attainment in support of national security objectives. Further reduction in marketing, advertising, and outreach efforts and resourcing, would clearly present challenges to future accession goal attainment.

Specific impacts to recruiting are measured through leads and contracts with direct linkage to advertising efforts. In fiscal year 2008, 44.7 percent of Navy accessions (20,218 contracts) originated from advertising efforts. The national unemployment rate at that time was 5.2 percent. As the unemployment rate declines, recruiters will need more assistance from advertising-generated leads to meet accession goals. With current levels of unemployment, 22.64 percent of contracts (9,810) come from advertising. These are direct effects and do not account for the indirect effects that advertising has on influencing and reinforcing the joining behavior of our market.

Outreach programs, including Navy Weeks and Blue Angel appearances, allow the American public to directly interact with Navy representatives and afford them opportunities to observe examples of the technology and equipment sailors use in the daily performance of their duties around the world. These interactions prompt them to consider military service.

The value in funding paid advertising and participating in outreach events is derived from end strength requirements. Joint Advertising and Marketing Research Studies (JAMRS) indicate that 53 percent of armed forces accessions come from youth who, when asked if they would consider joining the military, had previously indicated "definitely not" or "probably not". Additionally, approximately 74 percent of high quality applicants indicated they initiated first contact with a recruiter. Advertising, marketing, and outreach events serve to drive these initial interactions by creating awareness and a positive image of the Navy and its career opportunities.

General MILSTEAD. In fiscal year 2012, 99.9 percent of Marine recruits were high school graduates and 74.8 percent scored in the upper half of the written military entrance exam. The quality of our applicants is higher than ever before. A critical requirement to continued success is our recruit advertising program. Our advertising program is used both strategically and tactically to deliver branded communications to support marines on recruiting duty, generate leads and create positive awareness that engages our prospect and influencer audiences. In total, recruiting a quality and representative force costs less than 1 percent of the Marine Corps' overall budget. Recruiter success is inextricably linked to operational and advertising support. Advertising creates awareness and drives consideration to serve in the military—it produces 'leads'. Advertising leads enable recruiters to efficiently focus their prospecting activities. Advertising dollars currently generate approximately 25 percent of all new contracts (enlisted) through numerous avenues, such as television commercials, enhanced area canvassing activities and social media outlets. A further loss of funding to advertising will ultimately lead to increased stress and reduced quality of life for Marine Corps recruiters most of whom currently work in excess of 60 hours per week. If advertising spending is cut back too much when recruiting is strong, potential long-term gain in awareness and propensity may be lost. The dramatic advertising cutbacks between 1986 and 1993 coincided with a considerable erosion of public awareness regarding military service.

General JONES. The Air Force advertising, marketing, and outreach programs are a critical component to our mission—to attract the best and brightest youth of America. Reduced funding for these programs will jeopardize the Air Force's ability to meet career field and DOD quality requirements. Even though the Air Force has

greatly benefited from historic highs in the quality of accessions in recent years, initial indicators are signaling a potential shrinking market for high quality recruits per JAMRS "State of the Recruiting Market," briefing April 2013. That same study indicates that 47 percent of new recruits were undecided about a career path and were influenced within a year of joining the Service. The Air Force must continue to strategically advertise, market, and maintain outreach programs to target the highest quality recruits and to convert applicants that are less propensed to serve.

INTEGRATED ELECTRONIC HEALTH RECORD

23. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, DOD and VA have been working on an integrated electronic health record (EHR) for a number of years with very little progress being made towards a truly seamless transition of health information between the two Departments. In January 2013, VA decided to use VistA, its legacy system, as its core health record despite the findings of a recent study commissioned by the VA that identified many VistA deficiencies. We've been told that DOD has been evaluating existing solutions to determine the appropriate core health record to use. Has DOD coordinated its proposed EHR program with your Service?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, the Army has coordinated with the Navy and Air Force in the review of the request for information submissions. This information was released to the public on February 8, 2013. Results and recommendations were briefed to DOD leadership and the three Service Deputy Surgeon Generals. Army functionals were active contributors in defining EHR Core capabilities.

Mr. GARCIA. Yes, DOD has coordinated with the Navy while analyzing and determining requirements for a proposed EHR program. We have participated in the review of the request for information submissions which were publicly released on 8 February 2013.

Mr. GINSBERG. Yes, the Air Force (AF) Surgeon General Chief Medical Information Officer has been involved in the Analysis of Alternatives (AoA) between VistA and other commercial electronic health records. Additionally, the AF Deputy Surgeon General has been a regular participant in DOD and Veterans' Affairs meetings regarding validation of requirements and evaluation of solutions. The Deputy Surgeon General has kept me and the Surgeon General updated.

24. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, how much will it cost for your Service to field a new EHR?

Mr. LAMONT. Specific dollar figures would be better obtained by DOD Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation as the numbers are acquisition sensitive.

Mr. GARCIA. The Services do not provide funding to this effort as all funding is centrally managed through the DOD/VA Interagency Program Office (IPO), the organization responsible for oversight and coordination of DOD/VA information-sharing initiatives. The Navy remains focused on tri-service planning for the joint deployment of an integrated EHR which achieves maximum economies of scale and standardization of the business process of healthcare among the three Services.

Mr. GINSBERG. DOD's electronic health record cost estimates must be redetermined after the Secretary of Defense evaluates the results of the AoA. Prior cost estimates were based on a previous DOD and VA strategy that was determined by both Departments to be infeasible.

25. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what impact do you anticipate for your Services' medical readiness?

Mr. LAMONT. The integrated EHR provides a platform for a lifetime electronic health record from the time of accessions through a soldier's service and is a key enabler for seamless transition to the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Deploying the integrated EHR will provide improved access to medical records data and improve readiness capabilities, such as improved immunization tracking. The integrated EHR will improve medical records extraction to support the IDES process. The integrated EHR must have full compatibility with readiness data systems for all Services to enable crucial bi-directional data exchange. Current systems require duplicate efforts that introduce errors and gaps.

Mr. GARCIA. A new integrated EHR should enhance the ability to assess medical readiness for our sailors and marines. While information can currently be viewed via the Bi-directional Health Information Exchange, a single integrated EHR will afford expanded access to the source of that health information; permitting quicker assessment and care coordination among healthcare providers.

Mr. GINSBERG. With a new electronic health record, data and documentation pertaining to individual medical readiness will be better integrated into clinical processes, enhancing our ability to provide timely health measures to sustain the readiness of the servicemembers under our care.

26. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, do you believe the EHR must be deployable?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes, it is essential that the integrated EHR be deployable to support soldiers deployed to theaters of operation or contingency operations. A deployable integrated EHR will allow data input and visibility throughout the continuum of care from point of injury to DOD medical treatment facilities to VA treatment facilities. Documenting care in the deployed environment will enhance the accuracy of a soldier's medical history, which could affect future disability assessments and benefits determination.

Documenting pre-hospitalization care and assessment provides valuable retrospective data to conduct research to improve patient care to address preventable causes of battlefield death. Finally, a deployable integrated EHR also enables deployed providers to access the medical history of the injured soldiers, thereby improving the quality of care.

Mr. GARCIA. It is absolutely essential that the IEHR be deployable to support marines in the field and sailors at sea since a vast majority of marines and sailors spend significant portions of their careers deployed away from home station. A key feature of the integrated EHR is the ability to continue to document medical care in times of low or no network connectivity, and then synchronize data once a connection is restored so it is available for future use. To that end, the integrated EHR will provide one system permitting both the inputting of data and the visibility of that data throughout the continuum of care—from the initial point of injury through the Military Treatment Facility and on to the VA treatment facility.

Documenting healthcare in the deployed environment will enhance the accuracy of the medical history for our sailors and marines, which is key to ensuring they receive the right healthcare at the right time. Well documented healthcare is also critical for use in determining future disability assessments and benefits determination.

Mr. GINSBERG. In the Initial Capability Document approved by the Joint Requirements Oversight Council, the electronic health record should be deployable in theater and support the mobility requirements for en route care. The solution would eliminate the need for three separate theater electronic health record solutions and enhance continuity of care, even in "low-communication/no-communication" environments.

27. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, what input has each Service had on the EHR program?

Mr. LAMONT. Army Medicine as well as the Navy Bureau of Medicine and Air Force Surgeon General have been involved in the integrated EHR program from the beginning. Army's contributions to the integrated EHR program include: requirements generation and support with Clinical Informatics, Capability Management, and Enterprise Architecture assets. The Army Surgeon General is a non-voting member of the Interagency Program Office Advisory Board, which is responsible for integrated EHR governance.

Mr. GARCIA. Navy Medicine is actively engaged and currently collaborating with our Army and Air Force counterparts, as well the Veterans Health Administration. The Navy has provided subject matter experts to work on the Capability Integrated Project Teams, Clinical Informatics Teams and Enterprise Architecture Teams as well as staffing to assist with the requirements generation process. The Navy Surgeon General is also a non-voting member of the DOD Integrated Program Office Advisory Board which is responsible for integrated EHR governance.

Mr. GINSBERG. The Air Force (AF) Surgeon General Chief Medical Information Officer has been involved in the AoA between VistA and other commercial electronic health records. Additionally, the AF Deputy Surgeon General has been a regular participant in DOD and Veterans' Affairs meetings regarding validation of requirements and evaluation of solutions. The Air Force Medical Service and AF Communications communities have provided more than 100 clinical subject matter experts for the functional and technical requirements process.

BENEFITS FOR SAME-SEX PARTNERS

28. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, recently, former Secretary of Defense Panetta announced that DOD will expand benefits to unmarried same-sex domestic partners who declare a committed relationship, but will not extend those same benefits to unmarried heterosexual domestic partners. Do you agree with former Secretary Panetta, that when it comes to benefits paid for by hard-working American taxpayers, that DOD should favor same-sex domestic partners over heterosexual partners?

Mr. LAMONT. We support former Secretary Panetta's decision. Heterosexual couples, if they so choose, have the opportunity in every State to get married; currently, same-sex couples do not have this opportunity. The steps announced today are an effort to close the equity gap for benefits, consistent with current law. Once implemented, same sex domestic partners will be required to sign DD Form 683, (Declaration of Partnership) attesting to the committed relationship. Similarly, a DD Form 684, (Dissolution of Partnership) will be required if the relationship ends. Soldiers must notify their personnel official within 30 days of the dissolution and will be required to wait 6 months before entering attesting to another relationship.

Mr. GARCIA. As an assistant secretary of a military department, I am committed to supporting the requirements and priorities as determined by the Secretary of Defense. Many benefits for families in same-sex relationships remain restricted by law. Heterosexual couples, in contrast, have the option to marry and enjoy the full range of benefits. I am committed to working with OSD to ensure fairness and equal treatment and to taking care of all of our servicemembers and their families to the extent allowable under law.

Mr. GINSBERG. Heterosexual couples, if they so choose, have the opportunity in every State to get married, and their marriage is recognized in Federal law. Currently, same-sex couples do not have this opportunity (per Defense of Marriage Act), we can only recognize marriage between a man and a woman. The extension of benefits to same-sex domestic partners of military members closes the gap in equity for benefits consistent with current law.

29. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, was your Service consulted to determine the cost impact of extending these benefits to same sex partners?

Mr. LAMONT. The respective Services were not consulted directly. However, the Joint Benefits Review Working Group, which includes service representatives, considered cost impact as part of the overall analysis and determined that the cost was negligible.

Mr. GARCIA. Yes. The Department of the Navy was included among the representatives in the DOD working group established by the Secretary of Defense which, among other things, determined the cost impact of extending these benefits to same-sex partners.

Mr. GINSBERG. Benefit subject-matter experts were consulted during the OSD-led Joint Benefits Review working group and the Air Force provided input via this working group and various other Senior Leader briefings and discussions leading up to the announcement of benefits extension. From a fiscal perspective, the benefits that are being extended are of negligible cost. Some are cost neutral and self-sustaining such as MWR Programs, and Commissary and Exchange privileges.

TOTAL FORCE MIX

30. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, General Dempsey said, in his testimony last week, that DOD needs flexibility to keep the force in balance and, that everything must be "on the table" including the mix among Active, Reserve, and National Guard units. In view of the heavy wartime demand on the forces including the Reserve and Guard, what do you envision as a viable option to change that force mix for your Service?

General BROMBERG. The Army remains committed to the Army Total Force Policy. The Active Army, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve each serve vital roles in our National Military Strategy, and it is imperative that we use each component's strengths to best advantage to accomplish all of the Army's missions. We will carefully review force structure and mix changes as we gain more clarity on a future budget.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy conducts a comprehensive review every programming cycle after reviewing all applicable strategies (e.g., Defense Strategic Guidance and Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century Sea Power). Our program, as submitted, provides Navy with the optimal Active and Reserve component mix, by

which Navy can surge, regenerate and flex capabilities needed for current operations and future contingencies. This optimal mix is predicated on the assumption that the Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) Individual Augmentation demand for Navy personnel will continue to decline and that the Reserve component will continue to have the capacity to source those requirements. This strategy enables the active component to man our force structure units (i.e., ships, submarines, aviation squadrons, and other operational units) and provide forward presence required by the ongoing rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region.

Navy has leveraged some of the authorities enacted in the NDAA for Fiscal Year 2011, to more fully utilize the Reserve component to increase readiness and operational capacity. Specifically, title 10 U.S.C., sections 12304a and 12304b, allow involuntary access to Reserve component personnel in response to a major disaster or emergency (12304a) or to meet preplanned missions in support of combatant commanders (12304b). Trained and qualified reservists provide increased capability and capacity to meet strategic Navy requirements and enable us to transition to a force that can seamlessly integrate into an active unit or replace an entire active unit to perform routine operational missions. Additionally, we have successfully implemented continuum of service policies by which Reserve enlisted sailors have options for voluntary recall to serve on active duty for up to 3 years or to return to the Active component and resign their Reserve contracts. As we continue progressing from a strategic reserve to an operational reserve, opportunities for further adjustments in the Active/Reserve Force mix may become increasingly evident.

General MILSTEAD. While the Marine Corps is reducing the end strength of the Active component from 202,000 to approximately 182,100 for the post Operation Enduring Freedom environment, we do not plan to draw down its Reserve end strength. We believe the proportion of 39,600 reservists and 182,100 Active Duty marines is the right level for the foreseeable future.

General JONES. Total Force Task Force was formed to examine the operational impacts and cost factors associated with various approaches to total force integration. By identifying and implementing the optimum force mix of an Active, Reserve, and Guard component, we should be able to maximize operational effectiveness, better optimize total force efficiencies; and provide better stability over time to our Guard units, States, and Reserve organizations.

MILITARY COMPENSATION

31. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, our Nations' historical experience of pursuing cost savings by cutting military compensation has demonstrated that periods of designed reduction in overall compensation levels resulted in retention problems. And those retention problems, especially in the context of generally improving civilian employment opportunities, meant Congress was required to come back and authorize catch up increases to help us keep the highly trained talents and skills that we need. What is your assessment of the impact of the President's proposed slowdown in military compensation on retention and recruiting in your Service?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army believes that a slowdown in the increase in military compensation can be accomplished without sacrificing recruit quality or member retention. Conditions appear favorable for slowing the increase in military pay. Recruiting quantity is being met and recruit quality is high; retention goals are typically being exceeded. Any unanticipated changes in circumstances, such as a significant improvement in civilian employment opportunities, could negatively affect Army retention and recruiting. However, at present and in the anticipated future environment, the Army does not believe that a slowdown in the increase in military compensation will adversely affect its ability to recruit and retain an adequate number of high-quality personnel.

Mr. GARCIA. Military compensation is highly competitive today, and the President's proposed slowdown in base pay is not likely to cause recruiting or retention problems in the near term provided recruiting bonuses and retention pays are preserved. The most recent Quadrennial Review of Military Compensation reported enlisted members were paid at the 90th percentile and officers were paid at the 83rd percentile relative to private sector counterparts with comparable education and experience. Just 13 years ago, both officer and enlisted personnel were below the 70th percentile benchmark, and DOD made deliberate investments in military pay to meet that threshold. In the current fiscal environment, there is room to slow down base pay growth, thereby helping to mitigate further cuts to force structure, readiness and modernization.

Mr. GINSBERG. At this time, the Air Force does not foresee significant challenges to our recruiting and retention efforts as a result of the proposed slowdown in military compensation. Our Force Management program is a tailored multi-year strategy focused on sizing and shaping the total force with the right balance of skills to meet current and emerging joint mission demands. The Air Force's strategy over the past few years has been aggressive, allowing us to meet congressionally mandated end strength requirements and maintain a high quality force by leveraging voluntary programs first, offering incentive programs where needed, and implementing involuntary actions when required. Due to the expected improvements in the economy and the importance our airmen place on overall compensation, our recruiting and retention will be increasingly challenged, particularly as the Air Force addresses the need for its highly technically-skilled force. These compensation challenges may require increased recruiting and retention incentives for our future force.

FAMILY SUPPORT PROGRAMS

32. Senator GRAHAM. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, and Secretary Ginsberg, General Dempsey testified last week that unsustainable costs and smaller budgets require DOD to examine every warrior and family support program to make sure we are getting the best return on our investment. How do you assess the investments our Nation has already made in family support programs, and suicide prevention in particular, in moving the needle with demonstrable positive return on investment?

Mr. LAMONT. In late 2011, the Army adopted a portfolio approach to managing warrior and family support programs. This portfolio approach promotes a shift in the governance focus from individual program proponents to the entire group of related programs such as Suicide Prevention. In 2012, the Army piloted its first enterprise evaluation to assess how programs within the Health Promotion and Risk Reduction Portfolio contribute to specific strategic outcomes (Help-Seeking, Risk Reduction, Transition, and Resilience and Coping). The findings of this and future evaluations will focus on how programs could increase their ability to achieve the Army's strategic outcomes and improve our return on investment.

Mr. GARCIA. The Navy and Marine Corps continually evaluate the effectiveness of their programs to ensure the needs of our sailors, marines, and their families are being met. Assessment and research efforts help identify program deficiencies, program best practices and satisfaction. This insight enables the Department of the Navy to adjust internal programming and accurately direct external support to best serve sailors, marines, and their families.

The Navy actively participates in the Defense Suicide Prevention Office's (DSPO) program evaluation initiative. DSPO is conducting an analysis of the Services and the OSD Suicide Prevention programs in order to align and integrate programs, resources, policy, and strategy. The analytical method being utilized has the following three components:

- (1) Strategic Coverage: The Navy is supporting efforts to align and analyze suicide prevention programs to assess whether there are gaps in addressing the overall OSD suicide prevention strategic objectives.
- (2) Resource Allocation & Analysis: OSD and the Services are conducting a review of Suicide Prevention Programs to determine full costing of requirements/level of effort, funding amounts, and potential shortfalls. This review includes examining program duplication and AoA in an effort to reduce costs without significant negative impact.
- (3) Program/Portfolio Effectiveness: The DSPO recently completed an effort to establish a common framework and understanding of measures of effectiveness (MOEs), and ground rules, for Suicide Prevention Programs. The Services and OSD are examining measures of effectiveness and performance measures. This analysis will be used to realign existing program resources and ensure that highly ranked suicide prevention programs are implemented across all of the military Services.

Mr. GINSBERG. We have multiple forums that enable us to monitor the delivery of family support programs. Within our Airman and Family Readiness Centers, we have a very robust computer management system that provides us with real time data for our supported populations-service codes are used to record the type of support sought (e.g., financial management) and the system allows the provider to make notations of the visits. Additionally, the Air Force conducts biennial community assessments, through the Air Force Surgeon General, that provide valuable data on our ability to meet individual needs, and also collects information regarding

behaviors that may place an individual at risk. Further, the Air Force Community Action Information Board (CAIB), convened at the installations, major commands, and Headquarters Air Force, identifies community issues to emphasize the importance of taking care of airmen and their families. Since 1996, the CAIB process has focused extensively on monitoring, managing, and implementing suicide prevention best practices for use by commanders. Additionally, the CAIB provides detailed actions and discussions on sexual assault prevention, child and family maltreatment issues, and resilience. A significant outcome from the CAIB process has been the development and implementation of the Comprehensive Airman Fitness concept that concentrates exclusively on developing our airmen and families to become more resilient and better prepared to meet the unique challenges of military service.

TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

33. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, I am pleased to learn that DOD has now reinstated the Tuition Assistance program, previously cancelled by the Army, Marine Corps, and Air Force in response to the administration's failure to plan for sequestration. How does Tuition Assistance enable your Active-Duty Forces to meet the professional development requirements described by General Dempsey to establish the Profession of Arms as the foundation for the Joint Force?

General BROMBERG. Tuition Assistance supports soldiers in completion of classes leading to Associate's, Bachelor's and Master's degrees as well as certificate programs. This off-duty voluntary education program develops critical and adaptive thinking skills soldiers and leaders need to make informed decisions. These skill sets allow the Army to learn faster and adapt more quickly than its adversaries and inable, necessary skills to meet the challenges of today's operational environment.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Education is a critical strategic investment that enhances the overall effectiveness of our force. All assignments benefit from well-developed skills in critical thinking, problem solving in complex environments, and effective communications. Navy's unwavering support of the Tuition Assistance program, along with our numerous other educational programs and opportunities, support development of these skills and attributes across the force. Education becomes an asymmetric advantage in our ability to develop leaders who are able to innovate, adapt, and succeed in the planning and delivering of maritime joint warfighting and support capabilities.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps' tuition assistance program is focused on providing exposure to higher education for our marines. We expose marines to the critical thinking, analysis and problem-solving skills that one learns through higher education. While we know that most of our marines will leave the Corps after their first enlistment, we value involving them in higher education for two reasons. First, if they stay marine and continue to pursue higher education, they will develop the cognitive skills required of thinking institutions, as described by General Dempsey. Second, if those marines leave the Corps and re-enter civilian life, they return prepared to pursue higher education, develop similar skills, and contribute to the advancement of society. Either way, our Nation improves its thinking and problem solving capacity.

General JONES. Military Tuition Assistance provides the financial means for our airmen to pursue higher education. In turn, higher education provides the educational background crucial in developing the critical thinking skills needed for practitioners of the profession of arms. This means our airmen are more able to work in the dynamic climate of today's conflicts. Additionally, higher education allows airmen to develop the critical ability to make connections between seemingly unrelated events or information and develop holistic solutions quickly and accurately. Military tuition assistance will continue to be integral to the recruiting, retention and readiness of our airmen. However, competing funding requirements will necessitate changes in fiscal year 2014 and beyond to ensure the financial health of the program.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

34. Senator GRAHAM. General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, our force is exceptionally well-trained on suicide awareness and prevention, and yet we still experience the tragedy of suicide at an unacceptably high rate. What is your assessment on whether the current level of training and leadership engagement is sufficient or whether it has inadvertently created a cli-

mate in which some vulnerable individuals may have contemplated suicide because we talk about it so much?

General BROMBERG. We continually assess our training for effectiveness. The Ready and Resilience Campaign requires an assessment of programs that support the campaign. The Army has not completed an assessment on the correlation of suicide prevention training and the incidences of suicides overall. Suicides are complex issues with a multitude of variables influencing each. The Army focus on identifying the early signs of suicidal behaviors and intervention skills remains the best option in attempting to reduce the number of suicides. There is no known direct correlation that the increase in suicide prevention training has created a higher propensity of soldiers to consider suicide as a viable option to their problems.

Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The U.S. Surgeon General's 2012 National Strategy for Suicide Prevention recommends emphasis on resiliency in training, messaging and communications, as well as clinical practice guidelines. Navy's operational stress control training teaches skills that build resilience, navigate stress and identify resources that reduce risk of crises. By helping sailors develop life skills and promote comprehensive wellness—physical health, nutrition, fitness, proper rest, sound financial decisions, strong relationships and spirituality—suicide risk factors are reduced without explicitly discussing the subject. Navy's training is designed to foster meaningful discussion of stress and proactive ways to mitigate it and instill awareness of stress injury warning signs for those having trouble navigating through challenges.

Our strategic and tactical communications products provide best practices on how to discuss stress injuries that avoid risk of suicide. Adapted from the national suicide prevention resource center's recommendations, these Navy branded products are not only useful to guide training, but encourage leaders to engage in meaningful dialogue with their sailors, reinforcing the message that "It's okay to speak up when you're down." Finally, unit leadership engagement is critical to enable sailors to move beyond decades of negative psychological health perceptions and barriers, and to seek the help needed to remain resilient and operationally ready. Navy is confident that both the training strategy and leadership commitment to engage all aspects of suicide prevention will provide sailors and their families with the necessary tools to choose life.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps continually evaluates the effectiveness of its suicide prevention training and makes periodic updates to incorporate the latest evidence-based practices. Our evaluation includes partnering with Federal agencies, academia and private industry in cooperation with Defense Centers of Excellence for Psychological Health and Traumatic Brain Injury to study the effectiveness of our suicide prevention training.

To ensure that we do not inadvertently create a climate that talks about suicide too much, the Marine Corps adheres to the latest recommendations for reporting of suicide, which include offering hope and avoiding talks about suicide. We do not discuss suicide method, dramatic images, or act to glamorize a death. Discussing suicide carefully can correct myths and encourage those who are vulnerable or at risk to seek help.

General JONES. The current level of training on suicide prevention for leaders in the Air Force is appropriate. Suicide is one of the most challenging issues Air Force leaders at all levels face. The Air Force Suicide Prevention Program (AFSPP) is an effective evidenced-based, leader-led, community program that relies on 11 overlapping elements. The core of these 11 Elements is leadership involvement.

In 2011, as part of the Air Force response to the findings of the 2010 Volpe report on suicide in the military and the RAND report, "The War Within," enhancements were made to the 11 Elements of the AFSPP. One of the most critical enhancements was the development of a strategic communication plan to promote responsible reporting of deaths by suicide, encouraging help-seeking behaviors among all airmen, and removing barriers to seeking care. This was done to ensure that in our efforts to prevent suicide, the Air Force was not inadvertently promoting suicide. To that end, the Air Force Public Affairs Guidance (PAG) on Suicide Prevention was developed based on the World Health Organization's (WHO) "Preventing Suicide: A Resource for Media Professionals." The Air Force PAG provides guidelines on crafting suicide prevention messaging, responsible reporting information on death by suicides, delivering strength-based messages, championing responsible help-seeking behaviors in airmen, and modeling healthy behaviors and choices throughout our wingman culture. This approach is mirrored in annual training for all airmen and frontline supervisor training for at-risk career fields. Another enhancement was the development and issuance of comprehensive post-suicide and post-suicide-attempt guidelines. These guidelines assist leaders in the critical time after a suicide attempt or the loss of an airman to suicide to appropriately support the bereaved and

prevent additional suicides. Research shows that the time immediately following a death by suicide is a period of increased risk for friends, family, and co-workers of the deceased.

QUESTIONS SUBMITTED BY SENATOR KELLY A. AYOTTE

INTEGRATED DISABILITY EVALUATION SYSTEM

35. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what must be done to further reduce the time it takes for soldiers to progress through IDES?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army remains committed to making this process more accessible to our soldiers and their families. Over the last year, the Army has devoted an extraordinary amount of time, attention, resources, and leadership to improve the Integrated Disability and Evaluation System. These include doubling the total number of personnel supporting IDES nationwide, establishing and enforcing Army-wide processing standards, placing a General Officer in charge of IDES overall, and establishing three Medical Evaluation Board remote operating locations to reduce the backlog of Reserve component soldiers. The results of those efforts are evident in our Medical Evaluation Board and PEB processing time metrics and will reflect in the average time for the entire process once the current backlog of cases have finished the process. However, this is still a very complicated process touching unit, personnel, medical, Veterans' Health, Veterans' Benefits, and finance systems. Short of complete overhaul of the system, we believe redesigning the existing process within the constraints of current statutes will only result in unnecessary turmoil and confusion and will likely result in another inefficient process.

36. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what are the leading causes of delay?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army is meeting OSD's processing goals in all subprocesses of the IDES with the exception of the VA Preliminary Rating Stage and VA Benefits Stage. Recent process improvements in the Army's Medical and PEB processes have increased the average monthly input of cases to the Disability Evaluation System Rating Activity Site, creating a backlog. Until this backlog is eliminated, the Army will have difficulty meeting OSD's 295-day goal.

INVOLUNTARY SEPARATION

37. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, in your prepared remarks, you state that the Army will "need congressional support as it resorts to inevitable involuntary measures in the coming fiscal year." Why is it inevitable that the Army will need to utilize involuntary separations?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army must retain the very best soldiers to continue to succeed in performing our critical missions on behalf of the Nation. Our modeling has shown that current volunteer separation rates will not achieve the required end strength goals. Experience from the 1990s drawdown showed us that incentivizing voluntary separations prevented the Army from keeping many of its promising members. In addition, funding to support financial incentives for voluntary separations would be pulled from critical programs already significantly impacted by sequestration adjustments. For today's force shaping efforts, the Army is committed to deciding who we will retain and who must transition by putting in place a robust program of transition assistance for servicemembers and families. This will ensure all who must separate will have the tools needed to care for family needs and transition their hard won skills into our Reserve components or to civilian careers.

38. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, what level of involuntary separations do you anticipate in the next fiscal year?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Approximately 1,000 officers will need to be separated through promotion nonselection and Selective Early Retirement Board actions in fiscal year 2014.

39. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont and General Bromberg, in terms of grade, years of service, number of deployments, and military occupational specialty, what type of soldiers will be involuntarily separated in the coming fiscal year?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army expects to separate enlisted soldiers in the ranks of private through sergeant major, and officers at the grades of

captain through colonel. The majority of the members separating will have deployed and will span a range of specialties. We anticipate that many of these soldiers will be eligible to apply for Temporary Early Retirement Authority or regular retirement.

40. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, General Odierno testified that if sequestration continues, the Army may have to reduce at least 100,000 additional personnel. During last year's subcommittee hearing, you said that the Army may have to involuntarily separate as many as 24,000 enlisted soldiers and up to 5,000 officers. Has your estimation changed or are those the numbers we are still looking at in terms of involuntary separation?

Mr. LAMONT. For the Army to achieve an end strength of 490,000, we expect to have to require the involuntary separations of approximately 6,500 officers and just under 6,000 enlisted over the period between today and fiscal year 2017. If sequestration remains in place, those numbers would have to be increased based on any additional end strength reductions required.

41. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, consistent with current law, what is the approximate number of anticipated involuntary separations if sequestration continues until 2021?

Mr. LAMONT. The Army has not completed its analysis of sequestration impacts on the force. It would be imprudent to provide any numbers at this time.

42. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, will the majority of involuntarily separated soldiers be retirement eligible?

Mr. LAMONT. Yes. Since Temporary Early Retirement Authority is available, we anticipate that the majority of our separating soldiers will qualify for a retirement pension and benefits.

REDUCED RECRUITING POOL

43. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, in Secretary Lamont's and General Bromberg's prepared remarks, they stated that "recruiting is expected to be more difficult in fiscal year 2014." You mention that "one in four 17-24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army without a waiver". You also state that "One in five youths age 12-19 are currently overweight, compared to 1 in 20 in the 1960s, and this trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015." From a broad, national security perspective, what concerns, if any, do you have regarding a declining pool of eligible recruits?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. A declining pool of eligible recruits is a national security concern because it impacts the ability to field a quality, and diverse, All-Volunteer Force. This directly impacts readiness. While beneficial to the country, the steadily improving economic environment compounds the problem of the declining pool and adds to today's recruiting challenge. The Army has the mission to recruit over 100,000 eligible and qualified young men and women across all three of its components each year. The Army competes for these qualified youth with the other Services as well as colleges, universities, and industry. Of those who are eligible, only a small portion (8 percent) is interested in joining the Army. In order to convince this limited pool of the value of Army service over the other options available to them, Army marketing must be sufficiently resourced.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy is concerned about the trends, but has no concern from a broad, national security perspective, as the remaining Qualified Military Available (QMA) pool is projected to remain relatively stable. QMA is the official DOD metric for eligibility. Based on a fall 2012 assessment by OSD JAMRS, the high quality, eligible, and propensed, target market is estimated at approximately 529,500, which will meet the DOD accessions requirement. Navy will meet accessions requirements in the foreseeable future without relaxing accessions standards.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force role in national security requires us to carry out activities conducted by the brightest and most capable airmen and our ability to seek out and recruit these individuals is critical to our success. A declining recruiting pool reduces the Air Force's ability to find the diverse mix of applicants to sustain our highly technical career fields. Based on current worldwide trends and threats, the Air Force projects increased requirements in career fields such as Cyber. These technical specialties depend on our ability to provide

sufficient numbers of qualified recruits to sustain these career fields over the course of a 20- to 30-year career.

General MILSTEAD. The pool of highly qualified eligible recruits has been declining for several years now and shows no sign of improving in the near future. The Marine Corps has been proactive in addressing this concern. The backbone of the Marine Corps' recruiting effort is the High School and Community College program in which we focus our recruiters' efforts on the most qualified youth; although qualified prospect numbers are diminishing they are presently adequate. Access to high schools and college campuses is critical to our recruiters being able to meet face-to-face with quality applicants. With about 75 percent of the market being unqualified for military service, recruiter access to these educational institutions is imperative. Adequately funding our recruiting efforts, specifically advertising and personnel structure, will enable the Marine Corps to avoid mission failure in the coming years.

44. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, is the declining recruit pool a long-term trend we should be concerned about?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes, the declining long-term trend of young Americans who are eligible to serve in the Army is a concern. The United States is facing a national security challenge—not only a military recruiting problem. Recruiting is expected to be more challenging in fiscal year 2014; the Army and the Nation still face challenges such as rising obesity rates and decreasing high school graduation rates as we recruit the All-Volunteer Force. Today, fewer than one in four 17- to 24-year-olds are eligible to serve in the Army. More than 20 percent of high school students fail to graduate and one in five youths, 12–19 years old, are currently overweight. This trend is projected to grow to one in four by 2015. Recruiting soldiers to meet the challenges of the 21st century will prove increasingly difficult due to these changing U.S. demographics. Trends such as increased requirements for technological proficiency, increasing obesity and a reduced interest in military service not only limit the recruiting population, but potentially prevent some of the best and brightest from serving in our ranks and benefitting from an Army Strong foundation. The Army requires quality prospects that can adapt and operate in complex environments; the declining recruit pool is concerning as it may impact future capabilities.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy is concerned about the trend in obesity, increase in substance abuse, and the general lack of military awareness; however, analysis of the data indicates that the recruit pool is relatively stable through 2020. The size of the age 17–24 youth population is projected to increase between 2020 and 2030. Analysis of OSD JAMRS data suggests that, even with QMA factors applied to gross census numbers, the recruit pool remains large when compared with the projected number of DOD annual accessions of approximately 150,000; therefore, it is not expected to impact accession goals.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. Yes, a declining recruiting pool threatens the Air Force's ability to meet future national security requirements and marketing data, provided by the JAMRS, indicates that this trend is growing.

General MILSTEAD. Yes, for the sake of our national character as well as national security. Based on ethnicity or race, between 21 to 42 percent of young Americans did not graduate from high school in 2012. Another 10 percent cannot join the military because of their criminal records. When weight problems are combined with educational deficits, criminal records, and other disqualifiers, such as asthma or drug abuse, 75 percent of Americans 17 to 24 years old are unable to join the military.

45. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, will your Service be forced to lower standards in order to recruit a sufficient number of people?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. The Army has no plans to lower recruit quality standards to achieve its goals.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Navy does not need to lower its accession standards. NRC's analysis of the data indicates that the recruit pool is relatively stable through 2020. The age 17–24 youth population is projected to increase between 2020 and 2030. Even with QMA factors, the official DOD eligibility metric, applied to gross Census numbers, the recruit pool remains large when compared with the DOD projected annual accessions of approximately 150,000. Based on a fall 2012 assessment of OSD JAMRS data, the high quality, eligible, and propensed, tar-

get market is estimated at approximately 529,500, which will meet the DOD accessions requirement.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. It is too early to determine if the Air Force will need to lower standards in the future to meet accession goals. We have enjoyed a robust recruiting environment in recent years mostly due to the relatively high unemployment rate and a struggling economy. This recruiting environment has produced inflated quality indicators such as a higher than normal number of applicants qualifying in the highest mental aptitude test categories. We will continue to monitor our recruiting trends as the economy improves and other factors continue to shrink our recruiting pool and make adjustments if we feel it is necessary to meet production goals.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps has not, and does not plan to reduce our quality standards or enlistment criteria. Quality standards were maintained when the Marine Corps expanded in size during the recent decade. Studies and research confirm that quality applicants are an investment that ultimately saves money due to lower attrition—specifically, more individuals will complete their enlistment—which helps stabilize our recruiting accession mission. Most importantly it provides the highest caliber of force capable of adapting and succeeding on 21st century battlefields. Lowering standards to chase short-term gains in meeting accession missions leads ultimately to higher costs, a less capable force, and negative implications for national security.

46. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, how can programs like the National Guard Youth Challenge Program increase the number of eligible recruits?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. While the mission of the Army Reserve National Guard (ARNG) Youth Challenge Program is to intervene and assist 16–18 year old high school dropouts, the impact on expanding the ARNG recruiting market is minimal. Many of the National Guard Youth Challenge participants have law violations and would thus require misconduct waivers. Very few program participants join (14 percent) and many may not qualify if they do receive a GED or high school diploma.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. The National Guard Youth Challenge Program (NGYCP) is recognized as a Tier II education program by OSD. Per fiscal year 2013 DOD quality standards, 90 percent of total force non-prior service accessions must be Tier I High School Diploma Graduates (HSDG). Navy's higher quality standards require 95 percent to be Tier I HSDGs. Navy does access some NGYCP participants, but is limited by the academic quality standard. Absent modification to Tier I and Tier II HSDG standards, or increased academic performance on the part of NGYCP applicants, and applicants of similar programs, the NGYCP cannot increase the number of eligible recruits.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force agrees that national and local level programs such as the NGYCP can be effective in generating potential recruits by providing a means to qualify otherwise disqualified youth. The NGYCP is a community-based program that leads, trains, and mentors at-risk youth so they may become productive citizens. Many of these at-risk youth have other disqualifying factors prohibiting them from serving in the Air Force.

The Air Force has found it more cost effective to use our resources to generate awareness and interest for our programs by targeting youth still in school. The Air Force currently participates in various national-level sponsorships that focus on STEM and targets mechanically inclined youth, as well as the many local-level programs with involvement of our 27 squadrons and approximately 1,100 recruiters. The intent of our efforts is to educate youth and influencers on the high tech opportunities in the Air Force, and formulate a favorable impression of the Air Force as a viable and noble career option for youth.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps does not utilize programs like the NGYCP for expanding eligible recruits. Our source for our quality applicant resides in the traditional high school market. Applicants from the high school market consistently have lower attrition, score higher in qualifying test scores for classification to military specialties, and have fewer moral issues compared to applicants with alternative education credentials.

WOMEN IN SERVICE REVIEW

47. Senator AYOTTE. General Milstead, from a Marine Corps perspective, can you provide an update on the Women in Service Review?

General MILSTEAD. We are on track to have the new policy fully implemented by the deadline of 1 January 2016. We are continuing to follow a two pillar approach as we implement our plan in a deliberate, measured, and responsible manner. The first pillar is the opening of closed MOSs; we are nearly complete with the full review and validation of all physical standards for MOS qualification. Throughout this summer and fall, we will be testing 800 male and female Marine volunteers on MOS physical tasks and looking for correlations to our Physical Fitness Test (PFT) and Combat Fitness Test event performance. Following this research, we plan to have a physical screening mechanism in place to aid in MOS classification by the end of this year.

Our research at the Infantry Officer Course is ongoing. Over the last six months, four female lieutenants have volunteered for the course but none have completed it. An additional four lieutenants have volunteered for the course this July.

The second pillar of our plan is the opening of closed units. This process was initiated in 2012 with the approved "Exception to Policy." Currently, 48 female Marine officers and staff noncommissioned officers have been assigned to 19 previously closed battalions (Artillery, Amphibious Assault Vehicle, Tanks, Combat Assault, Combat Engineer, and Low Altitude Air Defense); continual assessment of this program will shape expansion to full integration by 2016.

SUICIDES

48. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, in Secretary Lamont's prepared statement, he discussed the serious problem of suicide in the Army. He states that, "The Army had 324 potential suicides during 2012—the highest annual total on record." New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program has received national recognition and has achieved tangible results on this front—not only in preventing suicide but also in assisting servicemembers and their families in the areas of mental health care, employment, and homelessness. In 2012, program care coordinators intervened successfully in 29 suicide risk situations. Are each of you aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes, we are aware of the New Hampshire Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program. The Army National Guard partners with the legislatively mandated Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program, which helps National Guard and Reserve component servicemembers and their families nation-wide, connect with their local support community before, during, and after deployments. All National Guard and Reserve components hold events and activities to provide servicemembers and their families training, information on child and youth programs, available benefits, resources, and services. The National Guard mandates servicemembers to attend Yellow Ribbon events, and family members are strongly encouraged to attend.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes; the Department of the Navy is aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program and the successes it has reported since its inception. Many of the core elements of this program are duplicated in the Navy initiatives and programs that support sailors, marines, and their families throughout the deployment cycle and transition to civilian life. The Navy applauds the National Guard for providing comprehensive protective initiatives that assist guardsmen with navigating stress. We continually review best practices of all Services and components to identify those that can be tailored to fit the needs of sailors, marines, and their families.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. We were not aware of New Hampshire's Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination program. We appreciate being made aware of the program and our subject matter experts are reviewing it for potential application to the Air Force Suicide Prevention Program.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps is aware of the New Hampshire Deployment Cycle Support Care Coordination Program. We are pleased that the program provides support to the National Guard members prior to, during, and post deployment.

The Marine Corps' Community Counseling and Prevention Services provides similar programs such as Operational Stress Control and Readiness, Deployment Cycle Training, and Third Location Decompression events, which are intended to prevent, identify, and manage combat and operational stress-related issues and increase access to mental health care by breaking stigma, raising awareness, and providing education and resources to support marines. Combat and Operational Stress Control

principles are embedded in training that reaches the total force supporting marines in theater, in garrison, and at home.

Additionally, the Yellow Ribbon Reintegration Program (YRRP) has been incorporated into the Marine Corps overall Unit, Personal and Family Readiness Program. YRRP, which was developed for National Guard and Reserve servicemembers and their families, is one of the many tools available to our units to ensure our marines and family members are well equipped to deal with the many challenges facing them.

49. Senator AYOTTE. Secretary Lamont, Secretary Garcia, Secretary Ginsberg, General Bromberg, Admiral Van Buskirk, General Milstead, and General Jones, are each of your Services looking to the National Guard for best practices that can inform your Services' efforts going forward?

Mr. LAMONT and General BROMBERG. Yes. Potential best practices provided by the National Guard are shared across the Total Force. Senior Army Leaders and Commanders also share potential best practices, lessons learned, and identify trends and themes implemented across the Army during monthly Vice Chief of Staff of the Army-led Suicide Senior Review Group meetings in an effort to help mitigate suicides and reduce risky behaviors. These lessons-learned and potential best practices are also posted on the Army G-1, Army Suicide Prevention website at: www.preventsuicide.army.mil.

Mr. GARCIA and Admiral VAN BUSKIRK. Yes, the Department of the Navy collaborates with all the Services suicide prevention offices (SPO), including the National Guard, to identify the best practices and successes of individual programs. Collaboration is realized through group engagements with SPO representatives and the DOD Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee monthly meetings. Best practices are carefully considered for inclusion into Navy and Service initiatives to improve support to servicemembers and their families.

Mr. GINSBERG and General JONES. The Air Force works collaboratively with the Guard and Reserve through the CAIB and the Integrated Delivery System (IDS) at each level of the Air Force (Headquarters Air Force, Major Command, and installation). CAIBs are cross-functional forums created to identify and resolve or elevate to the next appropriate level those community issues that impact readiness or affect the quality of life of Air Force members and their families. The IDS functions as the action arm of the CAIB and develops a comprehensive, coordinated plan for integrating and implementing community outreach, prevention, and resiliency programs, such as suicide prevention.

Also, all components of the Air Force (Active Duty, Guard, and Reserve) are actively engaged with the Defense Suicide Prevention Office in helping shape suicide prevention efforts across DOD through the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee, the General Officer Steering Committee on Suicide Prevention, and other working groups and committees. The Air Force also continues to collaborate with our sister Services to leverage the full extent of our internal resources, combining our experiences and best practices to improve our suicide prevention efforts across the force.

General MILSTEAD. The Marine Corps shares all of our resources, plans and findings with our sister Services, including the National Guard, through the Suicide Prevention and Risk Reduction Committee chaired by Defense Suicide Prevention Office. Additionally, we look to our sister Services and the National Guard for best practices to inform our prevention efforts. We regularly compare our initiatives to the best practices registry sponsored by the Department of Health and Human Services through the federally funded Suicide Prevention Resource Center.

[Whereupon, at 11:13 a.m., the subcommittee adjourned.]

